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HISTORY OF THE IRISH STATE TO 1014

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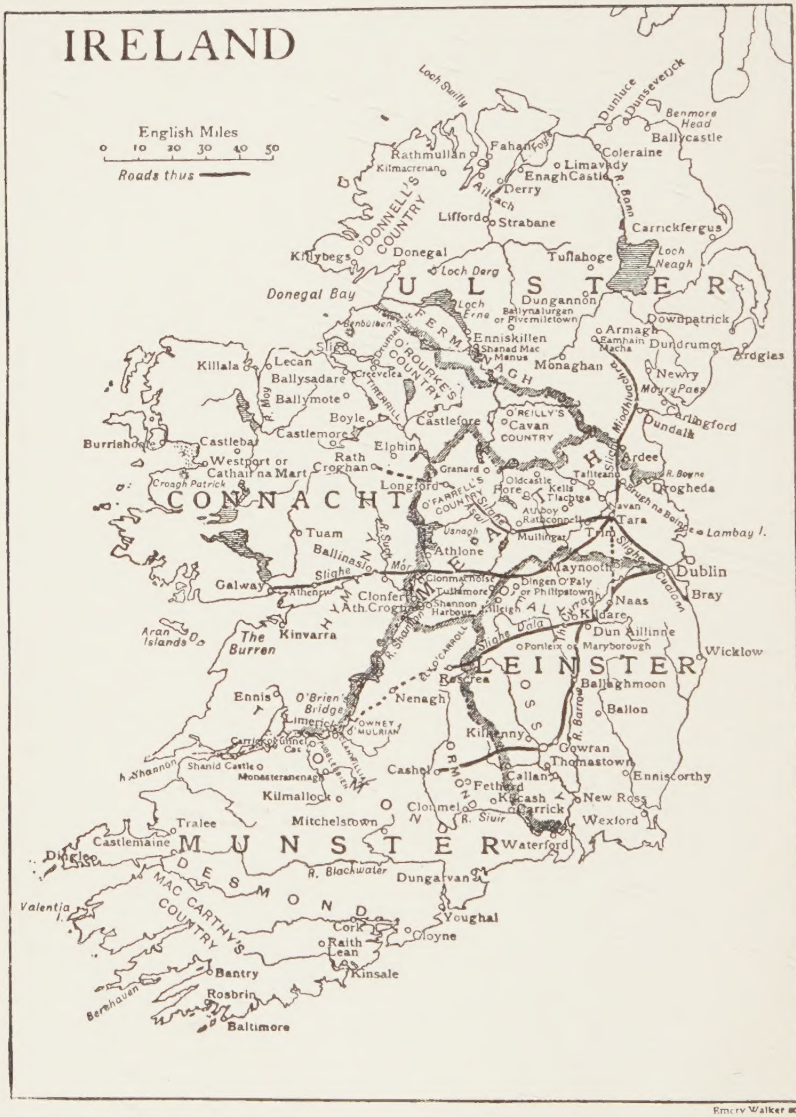


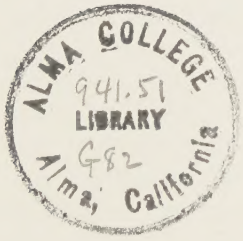
Emery Walker sc.

From "The Making of Ireland."] [*Frontispiece*

HISTORY OF THE IRISH STATE TO 1014

BY

ALICE STOPFORD GREEN



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PREFACE

In this book I have brought together scattered fragments of early history, and thus attempted to construct for the first time a continuous and reasonable account of the Irish commonwealth down to the death of its greatest leader Brían Boru.

In past times I spent many years in preparing a history of mediæval Ireland, and endeavouring to divest myself of prejudice and ignorance. I finally realized that no such history could be rightly written until the conditions of Ireland itself were investigated, as revealed in the native sources, sagas, poems, annals, genealogies, and the like, which are the State Papers on the Irish side, and need as serious study as the English State Papers. I therefore put together in "The Making of Ireland" some fragments of what I had written, and set aside the mass of the rest, to make a new beginning. The last half-dozen years have been entirely devoted to this task.

It was a task apparently hopeless. Nor could it have been undertaken without the aid of Dr. Eoin MacNeill, our leading guide in Old Irish history. By his fruitful labours in neglected sources such as the old genealogies, by his ingenious investigations on every side, and his new interpretations, he has opened to us roads of knowledge hitherto unexplored, notably in the study of Irish law. With characteristic generosity he has given to me, not only encouragement, but the free use of his historical notes, published and unpublished. For his unfailing advice and criticism I owe him my sincere gratitude. I owe it to him also to say emphatically that if I have used any part of his material with lack of historic judg-

ment, or with undue stress or exaggeration, the error lies solely with myself.

We may hope that the older Ireland will not always remain to the modern nation an unknown world. We are not without material for Irish studies. Indeed we may well marvel that, in spite of a destruction that scarcely ever ceased during eleven hundred years, so much should have survived. Since the prodigious efforts of O'Curry and O'Donovan much progress has been made, both by Irish workers and by scholars abroad. Unfortunately the results of their work remain scattered in various journals, un-coordinated, and necessarily inaccessible to most students. Our ancient records have been often badly transmitted, and sometimes only in a single version. There is still no dictionary of the older and most difficult language. Formidable errors of translation have therefore been inevitable in a speech so remote and so obscure. The most valuable source of knowledge, the Laws, have under these conditions been translated in such a way as to produce a sort of quagmire where no prudent investigator has found it safe to set his foot. Grave confusion, moreover, has been caused by the use of feudal terms of law to describe the ordering of a society framed centuries before feudalism was invented. Errors and difficulties will, however, gradually be overcome.

This book, though slight, is the result of years given to constant work at what often seemed an impossible task. I have not attempted to write a political history of the period, but simply to give a clear notion of the social and organized life of the Irish, their national character, culture, and laws. The methods by which the whole mass of the people were enlisted in the service of the law : the ceaseless transforming of strangers into citizens : the ancient problem of north and south : all these and many other questions, remote as they may seem to some of us, are in fact vital for Ireland after more than a thousand years. In these pages we may

trace the magnanimity with which Brían Boru approached such difficulties. Nothing is more evident than the admirable judgment with which the Irish chose their heroes, and the fidelity of their long national memory. It is never wrong.

A. S. Green

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HISTORY OF THE IRISH STATE

CHAPTER I

EARLY PEOPLES

Through all ages the people of Ireland have preserved with reverence the memorials of the ancient inhabitants of their land. It is a pious remembrance of an unbroken history. The descendants of prehistoric peoples still form the leading elements of the population in Ireland, and few lands are richer in monuments of a great antiquity, and artistic work left by these first inhabitants. The peoples who created Irish civilization have bequeathed moreover a heroic tradition and literature, which has assured to this island an eminent place, one of singular distinction among the nations of Europe (1).

Irish archæological research is still imperfect, and we cannot tell when men first appeared on this island. Remains of human life belonging to the close of the Palæolithic or Early Stone Age of Europe have been found as far north as Oban in Scotland, and there must have been a land connection between northern Ireland and south-western Scotland at that period, as the fauna of Ireland testifies. At Oban, as in Derbyshire and the Pyrenean region, it is the recesses of caves that have yielded the evidence of man in the late Palæolithic times. But in Ireland the great caves of Red Bay have never been archæologically explored, and in limestone caves stalagmite formations may conceal earlier remains of human life than have yet been identified. The first races of man that we know so far are in the Neolithic

Stone Age—a race of intrepid wanderers who, like the modern Eskimos, must have travelled far in their canoes, seeking food and ever changing their habitation, but always clinging to the shore where animal and vegetable life was more abundant than in the half-frozen inland desert. They fought their enemies and hunted for their food with weapons of flint, wood, and the bones and horns of animals. Their first home seems to have been on the north-east coast, where alone in Ireland flint is found, and in the flint implements found at Larne they have left the oldest signs of human handiwork in Ireland. Dwellers on the sandhills of the north coast used flint if they could get it, or made shift with local stones rudely fashioned. There probably grew up even a sort of commerce in flint, which was found in the chalk-cliffs of Antrim, from near Belfast round to Dunluce in far greater abundance than all Ireland could require. Even in our own time cargoes of flint have been shipped to Scotland, most of it gathered from the sea-shore or *débris* of the cliffs; and there are tokens of very ancient traffic in the flint tools found by Dr. MacNeill in the Dún Ruad in Tyrone, where they have been gathered in great quantity. By degrees a series of communities spread round the sea-line, living on fish and trapped animals, and in course of time made their way inland by river courses and lakes, travelling in hide-covered curraghs, or over tracks trampled by the forest beasts. These prehistoric people may have been a western branch of the Mediterranean race; but we know nothing of them save from the monuments they have left in Irish fields. It seems from fragments of bones and finger-prints on the old pottery that they were a small and delicately-formed people, the men on an average about five feet seven inches, the women about five feet high. The flat round-bottomed bowls for food which have been found prove their artistic sense of beauty, their feeling for line and delicate curve, and skill in working simple forms of decoration. It is supposed that

pillar-stones may have been first set up by the Neolithic people as sepulchral monuments; the long reverence that attached to them may be seen in a record of the Annals of the fall in 999 A.D. of Lia-Ailbe, the chief monument of Mag Breg; and of how Mael Seachlinn the high-king made four mill-stones out of it—whether as an act of war or defiance we cannot say. The Neolithic peoples were probably architects also of the *cromlech* or stone circle surrounding a central grave; and the *dolmen*, a double series of huge stones embedded in the earth to form the avenue of approach and to support a gigantic slab over the tomb. The dolmen of Howth with its massive top-stone weighing about ninety tons gives some idea of the skill and the organization of these ancient peoples.

The harsh conditions of the Stone Age were relieved by a change in climate, and by the intelligence of man. After the retreat of the ice, and subsequent uplifting of the land, the temperature rose (*c.* 3000 B.C.) some four degrees higher than it is now, so that it was possible to till the hill-sides for eight to twelve hundred feet higher than the present level. Life became easier, food more plentiful, movement to new homes less arduous, and winter floods less severe. The immense forests were widely inhabited by neolithic peoples. Man for his part made the discovery of copper, and its uses, not only for implements of defence and of hunting, but for war against the forest and for tillage. In the south and west of Ireland copper was plentiful, and in the old workings of Waterford and Cork we can see where the primitive men laboriously dug it out of the earth with stone tools and deer-horn picks. Small knife-daggers of copper, halberds for battle, celts and hatchets used for cutting trees or for slaying enemies, have been found over the whole country, and even moulds for casting the copper implements. With the invention of hardening the soft copper by a mixture of tin the Copper Age passed into the Bronze Age, which lasted perhaps fifteen

hundred years, possibly about 1800 to about 350 B.C. Instead of the weak copper knives bronze sickles were made to reap the corn, axes and spear-heads for killing forest game, rapiers and swords for battle. The new-fashioned hatchets and weapons were no doubt the treasures of the rich, while humbler folk still toiled on with stone hammers and chisels and wooden shovels.

A profusion of bronze instruments has been found in Ireland, as well as the moulds for making them. From these we can judge how great must have been the demand for tin, beyond what could be got from the veins of tin in the old gold-producing district near Arklow, and how active therefore must have been the trade for the richer stores in Britain and Spain. The natural affinities of Ireland were by sea-borne trade with western Europe, and intercourse extended along the Atlantic sea-board, and to the Mediterranean and Sicily. As early as 1600 B.C. another route led from Crete and the Aegean northward by the Moldau and the Elbe to the Baltic, crossing to Scandinavia—the famous way of the amber trade which connected the northern countries with the Mediterranean. Both lines of traffic reached Ireland. Some of the old forms of Irish daggers and rapiers show that models had come from France and Spain, even from Greece and the Aegean islands. A bronze anvil has been found and hammers, corresponding to those which in Homeric times were carried about by Greek goldsmiths. The northern trade is proved by the Scandinavian amber found in Ireland. By both ways of communication—by the Mediterranean, and by the way of the North Sea—there came new patterns of decoration, elaborate spiral designs carved on great rock-slabs, ship-markings, cups hollowed in the stone, a number of emblems whose meaning is obscure or lost. The Abbé Breuil has found Irish rock markings identical with those he observed in Spain, both bearing an elaborate conventional symbolism which proves an identity of religious or social tradition. Throughout the Bronze Age, in

fact, Ireland was in constant communication with the maritime traders of Europe. From the beginnings of civilization she entered into the general society of peoples.

That land in favourable regions was opened out for tillage is certain. Wheat was grown in prehistoric times. The pre-Celtic race of the eastern river-valleys, makers of the great chambered tombs, had cleared " the old plain " between Howth and Tallaght—Mag nEalta, " the plain of flocks of birds," rooks, starlings, and gulls following the plough. North of the Liffey in the rich land of Mag Breg stretch broad pastures where the name of Moynalty still survives. The famous plain of Muirthemne seems never to have been wooded land, but a place of tillage. There (in what is now known as Louth) Dagda had given a subterranean palace to Lugh (the sun-god whose festival was on August 1st) in Lugmad, for an older Lugmed, as the ancients knew, and explained it to mean Lugh's corn-measure. The wondering awe of that age at the first triumphs that man had ever won over the forests and swamps of an Atlantic climate still lives for us in the ancient traditions of lakes that sprang forth, and plains that appeared, of rivers that burst from the earth, and causeways that rose at the ports, till every plain and lake and river had its record of divine and miraculous manifestation. Other works of the ancient races we can still see and measure, and count the very stones. They turned every convenient promontory into a fortress, building a stone wall across the neck, till the coast was ringed with strongholds, many almost inaccessible. The famous fort of Dubh Caher that overhangs the ocean from the cliffs of Aran Mor was defended towards the sea by a wall twenty feet high and sixteen to eighteen feet thick, while the land side is guarded by a *chevaux-de-frise*, a broad barrier of sharp stones standing in the earth two or three feet high. What manner of people held the rocky islands and the immense cliff fortresses such as Aran? It may

have been against some race of predatory marauders that the people sought shelter in the frequent subterranean refuges deeply excavated behind hidden entrances, with long connecting passages, and at every turning-point or chamber blocks of stone elaborately planned for defending the passage step by step. Fortresses of another order were raised near estuaries, such as Steig in Kerry, or the fort on the hill of Ailech near Loch Swilly with its amazing concentric ramparts and hidden galleries; others guarded important rivers, or protected tilled plains. From early times people sought security in lake-dwellings in shallow waters, constructing a stockaded island of mixed materials—timber, trunks of trees, brush-wood, earth, and stones arranged so as to form secure foundations for their huts. Ring-forts of earth and cashels of stone were spread over the land, for the most part defences, not against human enemies but for the protection of the homestead and the cattle from wolves or wild animals, or from flood or storm. They are found in every age, and in great numbers along the course of gentle streams, in pleasant valleys where people gathered thickly for pasture, tillage, and fishing. In the neighbourhood of Dundalk the old ringed steads are as numerous as the modern farm-houses. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century the Ordnance Survey reported, after much destruction, ten thousand raths and cashels still remaining in Munster alone.

Sepulchres of the dead were raised on mountains overlooking the sea, along the main river valleys, on upland slopes, or in sheltered hollows. In the cromlech or dolmen, in burial circle or rath, the central idea is the same; a chamber of the dead, with its approach, its dedicated space, and its strong protection. These groups cannot be dated. One age merged into another, and religious rites did not change because tools were made of bronze instead of stone. Throughout Old Irish tradition and literature there is an ever-present awe before the cairns lifted on mountain and crag, the stone

circles, the immemorial fortresses, the ancient cemeteries in the plain: according to their own old poem recalled by Kuno Meyer,

> " The fort remains after each in his turn,
> and the kings asleep in the ground " (2).

The greatest of the circles, the vast enclosure of " the Giant's Ring " near Belfast, was clearly a place of assembly round the central grave of the dead hero; and so also the circle at Naas in Kildare. The most famous of the chambered raths in the cemetery of the Boyne valley lie along a space of three miles, monuments so astonishing for their labour and skill that some thousand years after the builders were forgotten Celtic conquerors, believing them to be the subterranean palaces of the ancient gods, laid their own kings in death with the high company of the Tuatha dé Danann, in " the house of Oengus of the Brugh," given him by the great father of the gods Dagda—" the good god " (whose name survives in a traditional oath of West Munster, " an Daghdha "). " It cannot be burned or harried so long as Oengus shall live," was the tradition many centuries later. In the chief mound of Brugh na Bóinne the old workers have bequeathed to their country one of the greatest funeral chambers in Western Europe. With its enclosing circle of standing stones the mound must have covered two acres of ground: the stones at the entrance even now stand from six to eight feet high, with a girth of from fifteen to twenty feet, and behind them the massive entrance leads to the passage roofed with slabs of stone meeting in a triangle, and to the inner burial chamber domed by overlapping masses of rock. Everywhere it is enriched by boldly inscribed stones, at the doorway, on the walls, inside the roof. The ancient carving, punched on the rock with a sharp-pointed stone and cleared after by a tool, carries in its designs of spirals, concentric circles, half circles and rays, and ship-markings, evidences of influence from the eastern Mediterranean, probably

passing by way of the Baltic through Scandinavia and Scotland. Richer still in ancient carvings are the range of the great chambered cairns on Slíabh na Caillighe (the "Loch Crew Hills"), very wonderful, which fill the visitor with a sense of awe. A great group of tumuli, once probably connected with the famous cemetery of Tailtiu, or a part of it, are now little more than a memory, for about 1864, in the black generation after the Famine, no less than twenty-two of these raths were carted away for farming purposes.

One of the oldest village sites in northern Europe—the only monument of this kind known in the British islands—was explored in 1912. Professor Macalister has mapped out the rocky wind-swept plateau of Carrowkeel in Sligo, a natural fortress lifted from eight hundred to a thousand feet above surrounding forest and swamp, where the inhabitants of the old small race seem to have set up tents or huts in about fifty groups, each little group protected from wolves and bears by circular walls three feet thick. On the bare ridges of rock, in a fastness so secure that the Ordnance Survey failed to discover them, fourteen cairns and two dolmens of the old cemetery have survived the shattering of three thousand or more years of mountain heat and cold, rain and frost. No labour or art known to their time was spared in building the chambers within the mounds where the ashes were preserved, or the bodies buried, of men and women and infants. The prodigious task of carrying stone slabs more than nine feet in length, or lifting a massive block four tons in weight to crown a dome; the skill shown in slanting roof slabs by layers of small stones so as to shed any water that might percolate through the upper mound; the sense of symmetry in the careful selection and cutting of blocks of stone, perhaps quarried for their special purpose from a single site; the proofs of architectural design, and of power in carrying it through—all these qualities are united to create buildings in which "the constructional skill displayed is beyond all praise,"

and which must be regarded in certain cases "as a veritable work of art."

Works on such a scale, and of such architectural design, must have been carried out by a society fairly settled and organized, with a living tradition of heroic ancestry, and a sense of the majesty of their hills and plains. For untold centuries the cemeteries remained hallowed sites where in yearly assemblies successive peoples commemorated the dead and renewed the tradition and law of their common life. Some are still well known among us, such as Brugh on the Boyne, and the yet more touching "Crúachu of sadness" in Roscommon. The cemetery of Tailtiu is now little more than a memory; the sites of many, like the once renowned Carman, have been lost. Others have remained nameless, their very existence unnoticed and unmarked by Government surveyors mapping out the country. We owe the survivals of rath and ring-fort and cashel to the piety of the Irish people, who in ploughing their fields left untouched the sacred enclosures of a prehistoric world. A Presbyterian farmer in Tyrone still keeps guard over a pagan cemetery on his land. His son proposed to level it, but "it will not be touched in my time," said the old man. But until scientific research is organized to do its work the wealth of Ireland is wasted, and her early civilization lies in darkness.

Meanwhile scholars have, in a rough and tentative manner, divided the fifteen centuries of the Bronze Age into four periods, according to the advance made as men devised improvements and new forms for tools and weapons, and better methods for their manufacture, such as casting in moulds, first of sandstone, then of earth and sand. The finest bronze casting known anywhere was in Ireland. There is none better than that of a rapier from Loch Erne; nor more remarkable than the rapier from Co. Derry of over thirty inches, the longest ever found in western Europe. The collection in Dublin of bronze relics—the great bronze cauldrons,

the decorated celts, the finely shaped spears and swords, the splendid trumpets after a southern pattern, the shields of bronze, of alder, of leather, the ornamented bronze pins for fastening a cloak—all show the pride of the craftsman in the superb mastery of his art. The history of ornament, however, still remains obscure. Inscribed stones bearing the imported designs of spirals and circles are only found in a belt across the north, from the Boyne to Sligo Bay; in a brief time the fashion completely and finally disappeared, and throughout the Bronze Age the ornament followed always the same cross, triangle, and hatch pattern. In these, however, there remained an artistic sense of measured space, proportion and restraint. The pottery of daily use increased in size, variety of form, and richness of decoration.

Ireland, with all the necessaries of life in abundance, had from the first a trade in luxuries. The gold of Wicklow was an ancient article of commerce. Already in the twelfth century B.C. there were goldsmiths making the *lunulae*—flat neck collars of gold decorated with the finest artistic judgment and skill—which were worn in every part of Ireland, and exported to Scandinavia and the coasts of northern Europe from Zealand to Brittany. These gave place about 1000 B.C. to skilfully twisted golden *torcs* fastened with great hooks; after which, about 700 B.C., massive gorgets were made with new devices of elaborate decoration taken from patterns of Scandinavian work. On one of these gorgets a woollen thread round which is twisted a flat strip of gold remains as one of the oldest specimens of woollen cordage in Ireland. Gold was lavished in rings and bracelets, chains, sun-discs, fibulae to fasten the cloak, great hollow golden balls. Ancient traditions record the names of Tigernmas by whom gold was first smelted in the Wicklow valley of the Liffey, and of Iuchadán the artificer of south Wicklow. "It was by him that goblets and brooches were first covered with gold and silver in Ireland. It

was by him that clothes were dyed purple, blue, and green." The dress of a man of substance has been preserved in a bog where the unfortunate traveller was engulfed, and we can still see the remnants of a woven garment of wool with fringe and tassels elaborately worked in horse-hair, and a razor with its leathern sheath. In fact, before the coming of the Celts the older peoples of Ireland had found means to exploit its resources. The discovery of early Irish gold ornaments in foreign countries shows an extensive trade north and west. Thirteen gold finds in Wales are held to have come from Ireland. Golden lunulae and torcs were widely dispersed. Five have been found in Scotland, twenty-four in England, and fifteen scattered through Denmark, Hanover, Belgium, France, and Jersey. It would seem that the gold of Wicklow, probably surface gold and the washings of river sands, was practically used up by the older inhabitants, for the museum in Dublin with its unparalleled wealth of gold ornaments from prehistoric Ireland has no more than two which are of Celtic design. The great bulk of gold used after the Celtic invasion was not native gold (3).

Irish tradition told of a series of invasions, wars, and successive colonies ending in pestilence and death. All distinct knowledge of the past, however, has been obscured by the learned fictions of the annalists and genealogy makers of Christian times. Overawed by the authority of classic authors, and the pride of empire which Rome had bequeathed to the world, they set themselves to shape Irish history after the fashionable manner of Latin models. In the interests of symmetry, and to give Ireland a good place in the orthodox framework of world history, patriot scholars devised a fantastic scheme of genealogies and chronologies by which the invasions of the island should be forced into line with the Empires known to classic fame. The learned men's terror of provincialism, and of a merely national history, ended in double disaster—the complete discrediting down to our

own day of all early Irish history; and the confusion or destruction of a mass of genuine tradition of great importance for the study of European civilization (4).

Four great legendary invasions of Ireland were reported or invented in the old Irish schools:—the coming of Parthalón, of Nemed, of the Fir Bolg, and of the Gaedhil.

I. The leader of the first colony after the Flood, Parthalón, represents a veritable ancient tradition—a relic of genuine and characteristic folklore. By the learned men he was made to synchronize with Abraham and the Assyrian Empire. Reputed ancestor of the Picts, he and his people came sailing in six ships from the east, landed on May 1st, the festival of Beltene, fought the older inhabitants, Goll and the Fomorians who lived by fishing and trawling on the coast, and settled themselves on "the old plain" of Mag nEalta, the famous cleared land that stretched between Benn Edair or Howth and the mountains. There he died and was buried, and after three hundred years his whole posterity, nine thousand of them, were by a convenient fable cut off in a week of pestilence beginning on May 1st at Tallaght or at Benn Edair. At the time of his coming there were said to be in Ireland but three lakes, nine rivers, and one open plain—Senmag, "the old plain"; during his life and that of his children three plains were added and some lakes. A sole survivor was preserved, Tuan mac Cairill, who lived through metamorphoses as a stag, a boar, a sea-eagle, and a salmon, till his human form was restored that he might recite to S. Patrick, S. Columba, S. Finnén, the story of the successive invasions of Ireland.

Another legend which seems to have genuine folk-elements is that of Cesair, who arrived in Ireland before the Deluge, and perished in the Flood with her companions, all save one, Fintan, who also was miraculously preserved alive till the time of Columcille, and of the "Settling of Tara," to give to the men of Ireland full knowledge of the antiquity of their race and of Ireland

their home. Her story was edited in Christian times, when Biblical elements were added, and she became the granddaughter of Noah.

II. Nemed, brother of Parthalón, ancestor of the pre-Gaelic races of Ireland, sailed from the Euxine Sea. His name is Celtic, meaning "the holy one," and may testify to the reverence of the Celtic-speaking invaders for the religion of the older inhabitants—a sentiment reflected in the great influence obtained by the druids, who according to Irish tradition were of Pictish origin. In the scheme of the Old Irish scholars Nemed was allotted his place in the age of the Median Empire. Warrior, mighty hewer down of forests, revealer of plains and lakes, first builder of great rath fortresses, his fame extended from Barrymore, the Great Island off Cork, as far as Emain Macha in the north, which was supposed to take its name from his wife. Nemed in his turn was supposed to have died of plague, with three thousand others; and the remnants of his race were driven out of Ireland by the Fomorians two hundred years later.

III. The same race, however, returning after two hundred years of wanderings under the name of Fir Bolg, were made to synchronize with the Persian Empire. They were held of ill repute for their slave-life in the east as makers of leather bags, and for their reported incapacity for building royal seats and clearing forests. But they were mighty warriors, who took up the ancient wars with the Fomorians, and in Ireland there is no scene more full of solemnity and awe than the hoary graves of Mag Tuired in the modern Leitrim, legendary memorials of the heroic battle in which the Fomorian Balor of the Mighty Blows was slain—the Balor of vivid story in Ireland, with one eye in his forehead and another opposite it at the back of his skull, whose foul glances could strike men dead. Builders of kingdoms they were too, whose five leaders divided the island into the Five Fifths which left a lasting mark on Irish history. Under

their king Eochaid and his wife Tailtiu law and justice prevailed, assemblies and courts were held at fixed dates every year, and solemn judgments were given on the site of Tailtiu's dwelling and of her burial. Evidently these people left a reputation for political sagacity, and the founding of ordered States and Law.

IV. Last of all invaders came, the race known by a fiction of learned invention as the Children of Míl (probably from *miles*, a soldier) or Milesians, whose settlement was timed against the world sovereignty of Alexander the Great. Their pedigrees and their wanderings were invented by the busy genealogists from the seventh to the ninth centuries A.D. Scholars compiled for them a descent from Japhet, but the pedigrees were not agreed as to which of Japhet's sons was the ancestor of the Gaelic race. The land of their origin was disputed, since the names later attached to them, *Scotti* and *Iveri*, were supposed to resemble those of the Scythi and Iberi, and to point to original homes in Scythia or in Spain—Scythia being the most favoured idea. The story of their wanderings in exile from their first country till they reached Ireland followed the geography of the world as it was ignorantly supposed to be by Orosius and Latin writers of the fourth century. The place of their first landing—Inber Scéne—has not been identified, unless it may be a scribe's error for Sena, the Shannon. On May 1st the feast of Beltene, they were supposed, like the first colonists under Parthalón, to open their conquest of Ireland. Driven from the south by a magic storm which scattered and wrecked their ships, they made a second landing at the Boyne, where after a victory at Tailtiu the sons of Míl, Éremón and Éber, divided the land between them.

The pride of the conquering race is shown by the description preserved in MacFirbis' Genealogies of themselves and of their subjects. "Everyone who is white (of skin), brown (of hair), bold, honourable, daring, prosperous, bountiful in the bestowal of property,

wealth, and rings, and who is not afraid of battle or combat; they are the descendants of the sons of Milesius in Erinn." "Everyone who is black-haired, who is a tattler, guileful, tale-telling, noisy, contemptible; every wretched, mean, strolling, unsteady, harsh, and inhospitable person; every slave, every mean thief, every churl, everyone who loves not to listen to music and entertainment; the disturbers of every council and every assembly, and the promoters of discord among people; these are the descendants of the Fir Bolg, of the Gailiúin, of the Liogairne, and of the Fir Domhnann, in Ireland. But, however, the descendants of the Fir Bolg are the most numerous of all these" (5).

The Tuatha dé Danann and the Fomori have been often included in the list of immigrant peoples. But in old tradition these appear, not as mortals, but as supernatural beings of good or evil powers. According to the Irish system, in which the night comes before the day, the evil gods of darkness were first and oldest, the malevolent god-race of the Fomori from the chill northern ocean and their gloomy fortress in Tory island—eternal enemies of the Irish, enemies to Parthalón's people, and after them to Nemed's race, and after them to the Gaels; demon bringers of pestilence, gods of monstrosity, of death and night and storm. It was their conquerors, the Tuatha dé Danann, the "peoples of the goddess Dana," god-folk of light and comeliness and benevolence, who came to Ireland without ships or boats, alighting from Heaven in the heart of the country on Slíab in Íarainn, the Iron Mountain, over Loch Allen. They brought to Tara the Stone of Destiny. By them, in the great battle of Mag Tuired, at the autumn festival of Samain, the Fomori were finally defeated and driven into hiding. The cherished names of Ireland came by tradition from three sisters of the Tuatha dé Danann, Ériu Banba, Fótla. The divine race were among the high ancestors of men. From them no single family or people could claim descent, but by repute they left a

scattered aristocracy of genius. The ancient Irish believed in divine ancestry, and their periodical assemblies at places of burial point to some form of ancestor worship; but when that tradition ceased the boundary line between remote human ancestors and ancestral gods was lost. Later genealogists took up the old tradition: generally, "everyone who is fair-haired, honourable, tall; every warrior, every man of music; the people of sweet string-music and of harmony; those who excel in every magic art, ... are the posterity of the Tuatha dé Danann in Ireland." Nevertheless an implicit censorship forbade the express recognition of divine ancestry in the written genealogies.

It is evident that the oldest Ireland was peopled by races of no mean quality, who left the country covered with the memorials of their skilled industry and their fine artistry, men equal to the culture of their time, and hospitable to foreign civilizations. In the political order also they were pioneers, and left a tradition of government that is still remembered in the ordinary Irish language of to-day.

By the older peoples the island had been divided into five main kingdoms which the Celts found established and called *Cóic Cóiceda Érenn*, or "the Five Fifths of Ireland." These divisions were continued under the new conquerors for many centuries without any change in the old boundaries. What early historians called "the time of the Pentarchs" (five equal kings) remains the oldest certain fact of our political history. From the Saga of the *Táin* and other ancient traditions we can roughly picture the five provinces. The Connachta lay between the Shannon and the sea north to Donegal Bay; Crúachu was their royal centre and place of assembly. The Ulaid stretched from sea to sea, with a formidable boundary of mountain, lake, and marsh from the Upper Shannon to the Blackwater and the Boyne: their royal city was at Emain Macha. From the Boyne to the Liffey were the North Laigin, with their capital

and place of assembly at Temair (Tara). Beyond the low watershed from Slieve Bloom to Wicklow, which

divides the basins of rivers flowing south to the Channel from those that pour east into the Irish Sea, were settled the South Laigin; the muster of the peoples was at Dinn Ríg on the west bank of the Barrow. To the

west Mumu, stretching into the Atlantic, was marked off by a line from the Shannon at Carrick-o-Connell to the Blackwater and Youghal harbour; its kings ruled and called their muster at Temair Érann, according to Dr. Westropp a site on the Slieveragh hills where two converging roads enter the pass between the Galtee and Ballyhoura Mountains and connect east Limerick and Tipperary with the Blackwater—a position almost on the frontier line dividing the Fifths of the South Laigin and of Mumu. In defiance of all geography it was said in old time that the Five Fifths met on the hill of Uisnech at the rock called Ail na Mírenn, the Stone of the Divisions.

After many centuries had passed these ancient divisions were in part broken about 300 A.D. by a new order of Irish kings, and old boundaries had passed away before the time of S. Patrick. But the prehistoric settlement had stamped itself on the Irish language, and though Ireland never again had Five Provinces, the word *Cóiced* or "Fifth" was under all later changes used by Irish writers of every generation for at least fifteen hundred years, to denote any one of the principal divisions of the country (6).

REFERENCES, CHAPTER I

(1) P. 1. The material for the study of prehistoric remains in Ireland is very incomplete and scattered, and can only be generally referred to here. Study should begin with the admirable collection of Irish antiquities belonging to the Royal Irish Academy. The best guide to this collection is contained in the works of the devoted scholar George Coffey: "New Grange (Brugh na Boinne) and other Incised Tumuli in Ireland;" "The Bronze Age in Ireland;" also "Two Finds of Late Bronze Objects" (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, XXVI, c. 7); "Some Recent Prehistoric Finds" (*R.I.A.* XXX, c. 4); "Ornamented Bronze Spear-Heads and Two Unpublished Lunulae" (*R.I.A.* XXX, c. 18, 19). Two studies by Macalister, Armstrong, and Praeger are of great interest: "Bronze Age Carns on Carrowkeel Mountain, Co. Sligo" (*R.I.A.* XXIX, c. 9), and "The Excavation of Lough Pairc Crannog, near Tuam" (*R.I.A.* XXXII, c. 9). The *Ulster Archæological Journal*, both the old and the new series, should

be examined for papers on prehistoric remains; and other *Journals* edited by existing Irish Societies. Also the *Journal of the Society of Antiquaries of Ireland ;* the last paper by Armstrong in that Journal (Vol. LIV, Part I) closes with this warning: "It cannot, however, be too often emphasized how little of Ireland has been scientifically explored. The future may have many surprises in store for archæologists, and dogmatism in our present state of ignorance is to be avoided." A paper in *Hibernica*, by Giacomo Boni, shows the interest taken by foreign students in Irish remains.

(2) P. 7. Kuno Meyer: "Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century," p. 19.

(3) P. 11. University of Wales: Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, Vol. II, Part II, May 1924.

(4) P. 12. See Eoin MacNeill: "An Irish Historical Tract dated 721 A.D.," pp. 141–143 (*R.I.A.* XXVIII, c. 6).

(5) P. 15. Eoin MacNeill: "Clare Island Survey 3," p. 10 (*R.I.A.* XXXI).

(6) P. 18. In the case of four of the Irish "Fifths" the name is a plural word, used first of the inhabitants. The Ulaid (gen. Ulad), Ultonians, Ulidians (from Latinized forms Ultonia, Ulidia); later used for the district—Ulster, and Ulstermen. So also the Laigin (gen. Laigen), north and south, Lagenians: later used for the district—Leinster, and Leinstermen. (Mide (Meath) replaced in later time the territory of the north Laigin.) The Connachta (gen. Connacht) gave their name to Connacht and the Connachtmen. The word Mumu is singular (gen. Muman), describing the territory of Munster.

CHAPTER II

THE CELTIC-SPEAKING INVADERS

The later invaders of Ireland emerge from a background no less remote and mysterious than the heroes of the Flood, but with a less fabulous career.

"A region, in its natural state a grassy plain, stretches from the marshes of East Prussia and the slopes of the Carpathian mountains eastward to the mountain ranges north of India.* In this region and at first probably in the western part of it was the home of an ancient people, who so increased in numbers and power that in time they spread over all Europe and a large part of Asia. As they spread and separated, out of their original language grew many languages. By comparing these languages with each other, as well as by other evidences, modern learning traces the branching out of the peoples. The names of the chief language-groups help us to realize the wide dispersion of this ancient race.

"The farthest eastern group is called Indo-Iranian. It includes the languages of the Persians and the Hindus of northern India. Then comes the Slavonic group, growing out of the language of the Slavs. These are believed to have dwelt at one time on the plain east of the Volga. They afterwards spread westward, and they are now represented by the Russians, the Ruthenians of the Ukraine and Galicia, the Poles, the Tchecko-Slavs to the north of Austria, the Yugo-Slavs to the south of Austria, and the Bulgarians. The West-Asiatic group has for its best-known representatives the Armenians.

* Dr. MacNeill has kindly given me this note on the early Celtic peoples.

The Hellenic group is typified by the Greek language. Of an ancient Illyrian group on the north-eastern side of the Adriatic, the Albanians with their language still remain. There was a Baltic group, now represented by the Letts and Lithuanians, and these are held to be the direct descendants of the ancient mother-people in its native region.

"Besides all these, there was a branch of the ancient race which came westward and occupied the central parts of Europe, from the Baltic and the North Sea to the middle of Italy. This western branch subdivided into three groups or sections, the Germanic people on the north, the Celtic in the middle, and the Italic on the south. Among the Italic group, the Latins took the lead, and their chief city, Rome, became the seat of the mighty Roman empire.

"The languages of all these peoples have certain elements in common that enable us to understand in some measure what sort of life was led by the ancient race from which they all originated. This ancient mother-people formed what is called a patriarchal society. Their social order was based on the authority of the fathers of families. Each father of a family held supreme rule over his children and his children's children while he lived, even over his married sons and their families. The family was monogamous, that is to say, a man had but one lawful wife. The wife left the family of her own parents, and became a member of the family to which her husband belonged. The government was exercised by a king and a council of elders or heads of families. The king was president of the assembly of the people, and he was also chief priest, chief judge, chief commander in war.

"Already in their ancient home, before their dispersion, they were a settled agricultural people. They had passed beyond the stage of hunters and of pastoral nomads—of people who move with their flocks and herds from one grazing place to another. They grew

corn, and tilled their land with the plough, which was drawn by two oxen yoked together. From the corn, ground in hand-mills, they made bread. They brewed fermented liquors, especially mead which was made from honey; and it is not unlikely that they kept swarms of bees. They kept cows, and held them in greater honour than all animals, recognizing the cow to be a sort of foster-mother to their own children. They also kept sheep, goats, and swine, as well as hounds. They wove garments of cloth, spinning and weaving the materials. But their most distinctive achievement was the taming of the horse, originally a wild animal native to the same grassy plain which they inhabited. It was their possession of the horse, added to the wholesome and vigorous character of their social organization, that placed this race in time at the head of civilization. Homer, the oldest of the poets and historians whose work survives, calls the ancient Greeks 'Horse-tamers.' Various names have been invented to designate the original race, Aryan, Indo-European, Indo-Germanic, but Homer's name, the Horse-tamers, is the most appropriate and distinctive.

"The earliest records of the Hindu branch go back to about 1600 B.C. In the succeeding centuries, others of the race pressed in on the borders of the Babylonian empire. Greece and Asia Minor were invaded probably between 1300 and 1200 B.C. With the occupation of Greece by the 'horse-taming' Achaians, European history may be said to begin. It is not known at what period the Italic branch, Latins and others, settled in the middle of Italy.

"Of the distinctive life of the Celts, our earliest knowledge comes from the exploration of certain sites in Upper Austria. Here the Celts were a settled people about 900 B.C., living an agricultural life and working mines for iron and other metals, and for salt. They spread westward through Southern France into Spain, and there is evidence that they were settled in the South of Spain between 700 and 600 B.C. When the Greek

colonists settled at Marseille in the south of France, about 600 B.C., they found the Celts in occupation of the neighbouring country. In north-western Europe, the Celts can be traced about 450 B.C. from the remains of their distinctive arts in the valley of the Marne. It was probably about a century later when they began to occupy the islands of Britain and Ireland."

From thousands of graves which have been opened in a cemetery at Hallstatt near Salzburg, we learn that it was strong men of middle stature who first discovered and worked the iron mines of this region, and founded the Iron Age of Europe. The populations of the older world could only live in fertile and forestless lands: it was the possession of iron, even now "the sole master of the growing wood," that gave to the Celts axes strong enough to attack the forest masses of northern Europe, iron spades and ploughshares to draw from the earth food for great numbers of men, and weapons to scatter warriors armed with flint and deer-horns and bronze. Hence it was that this people, mighty in numbers, bold in spirit, and advanced in the knowledge of mining and metal working, struck out freely on every side as a conquering race. Through iron they were pioneers and leaders in agriculture. Through it they acquired their special skill in the making of roads and vehicles. Those who reached the sea-ports had great success in ship-building and were daring navigators. The uses of iron in the arts of war as well as of peace assured them victory as in their expansion over Europe they marched south and west for conquest and government. Already in the seventh century B.C. they occupied southern France and thence passed into Spain. About 600 B.C. they entered Italy, where their influence is shown by the Celtic words which they gave to the Romans for wagons and nearly every variety of wheeled vehicle, as well as of weapons of war. They reached north-western Europe about 450 B.C. in the valley of the Marne. Northward they penetrated by their trade, culture, and institutions.

Skill in iron-work, and control of cross-European commerce, secured them domination over the Germans; while their political influence is shown in the Celtic words relating to kingship, public office, and towns, which spread through the whole group of Germanic languages. So powerful an intercourse, which must have lasted through centuries, brought about in the southern lands a fusion of peoples in which it would be hard to say which blood was predominant in those who talked Celtic; and in the northern lands a less mixed population—Celtic in language, but mainly Germanic in race. It must be remembered that neither ancient history nor modern ethnology gives a Celtic racial type as a distinct race. Those who spoke a Celtic language were reckoned a Celtic people.

The age known as the Hallstatt period was followed by one of even wider influence, remembered as the period of "the Marne" from cemeteries found along the river Marne; or of "La Tène" from the lake of Neuchâtel in Switzerland, where on the island of La Tène—the "great depths"—a mass of the later Celtic treasures has been found. Bronze had now disappeared from fighting weapons and from agricultural tools. There were signs of intercourse with the east, with Greece and Italy. From the Greek settlement at Massilia (Marseille) sculpture and the use of letters spread among the Celts of Transalpine Gaul. The remains of Celtic sculpture in Gaul show evident signs of Greek origin. Caesar makes the remarkable statement that in his time, when the Romans had not long emerged under Greek influence from a condition of practical illiteracy, the Gauls used Greek writing "in almost all their business, both public and private." With increase of wealth and luxury came forms of decoration very far removed from primitive designs in the richness and delicacy of their curves.

A second wave of "Celtic" immigration passed over Italy in the fourth century B.C., when they conquered

and destroyed Rome. It was in this new tide of dispersal that warriors from Gaul crossed the sea to Britain and Ireland, reaching Ireland perhaps in the fourth century B.C. A century later there was again a double movement of conquering hosts; the first turning eastward along the Danube to the Balkan peninsula, spreading over Greece and as far as Galatia in Asia Minor; the second going westward to a new invasion of Gaul. Germans east of the Rhine—a mixed population of invaders and Germans speaking a Celtic dialect—were driven by the hostile pressure of the German-speaking Germans west of the river, and in their turn drove before them the earlier Celtic-speaking settlers, and themselves occupied the country between the Rhine and the Marne. They were known to Caesar as the Belgae, a people whom he held to be of German origin, ruder, less civilized, and more warlike than the Celticized Galli who lay to west and south of them in middle Gaul.

Three groups of Celticized peoples now occupied Gaul, differing in language, culture, and institutions—the *Aquitani* bordering on Spain, mainly Celtic in language, otherwise mainly Iberian; the *Celts* proper, according to Caesar, in Gaul; and the *Belgae*, Celtic in language and mainly Germanic in race. On the other hand, peoples reckoned to be Celtic still continued to inhabit countries east of the Rhine, where Celts and Germans confounded together were united, not by race, but by language.

We do not know by what way, somewhere about 350 B.C., the first iron-armed invaders came to Ireland, not from Spain certainly, but from "sunny Gaul" where Caesar in his time recognized the people as Celts. They carried easy victory in their new weapons. Their iron crashed through every obstacle. But of the planting of the new race in Ireland we know nothing. Their numbers were probably small. Only one historic fact survives—the coming of a second wave of invaders. There is an ancient tradition of Labraid Loingsech the

Exile, who had taken refuge in Brittany about 300 B.C., and returned with an army of Gauls, landing at Wexford harbour to overthrow the king of Dinn Ríg on the Barrow, and to conquer the northern plain to the Boyne —two thousand two hundred foreigners they were, with broad lances in their hands, from which the Laigin (the Leinster men) have their name, "broad blue lances." Remnants of the lances have been found in various places from this time; but otherwise no record remains of these wars, which Dr. MacNeill connects with the Belgic settlement in the Fifth of the Laigin. Their wars probably lasted for two hundred years, from 150 B.C. to 50 A.D. But conquests were limited. Invaders were in fact now opposed by peoples of the same Celtic race or tradition, already entrenched and themselves armed with iron weapons. The campaigns of Caesar in Gaul inevitably closed any further serious invasion of Celts from that side, but probably did not interrupt raids from the shores of the North Sea, the home of the Menapii and the Cauci. These were good fighting men, for Caesar failed to subjugate the Menapii, who allied themselves with the Germans, and his ultimate success was to exact hostages from them. All this region revolted against Vespasian in 69 A.D.

During possibly four centuries of invasion Celtic warriors seem to have crossed the sea in small bodies, each little colony having its own government and its own gods. At some early time the continental Celts must have been governed by kings; but kings had for the most part disappeared in Gaul, and states had there been formed with penal laws against kingship in republics ruled by an aristocratic senate. From time to time one state might gain some political pre-eminence in a loose federation of free communities, but there was no organized superior power to interfere with the complete self-government of these patrician republics. In Ireland, however, doubtless owing to the military conditions of war and conquest beyond the sea, chiefs or kings estab-

lished themselves as leaders in war, and rulers in their several settlements (1). As each group of planters sat down to occupy a district a place of assembly was set apart, a centre for the levy of the army, a seat of customs for taxes and tribute, and a court of law. Here the king presided. But there was no tradition of centralized rule: every state preserved a lively sense of local autonomy, and of the rights of each ordered settlement to manage its own affairs. The warrior race was probably very mixed. It is even doubtful whether the foreign settlers in Ireland were known to themselves by any common name. The origin of the later name Góidil, Gaels, remains obscure. *Féni*, the word by which the freemen of Ireland are known in the ancient Laws, is likely to have been in earlier use than Góidil, but may itself be no older than the time of the *fiana*, *i.e.*, the time of the early Irish expeditions against Roman Britain. The little bands of new-comers, probably various in their origins, when they had chosen their forts made no attempt at extermination of the ancient race, whose intelligence, experience, and labour were needed in the fight with forest and flood, in the hunting for food, in the tribute of armed men for war, and for their skill in metal-work and crafts. The Picts remained in the Northern Fifth alongside of the Celtic race of the Ulaid at Emain Macha south of Loch Neagh, and were the chief part of the population in the territory later called Dál nAraide: probably the most widely diffused and important of the old peoples, they held large tracts west of the Shannon, in the middle land, and in the south. Dál Ríata was mostly peopled by Érainn, said to be of the same race as the men of Mumu. The great fighting races of the Luaigni and Galians maintained their position in the eastern midlands from the Shannon to the sea; the Galians, organized in three groups or *tuatha* in what is now Wicklow, Kildare, and King's County, excelled all other troops, holding their place as a separate folk even in the ninth century, when they

were still recognized as of non-Celtic race. They claimed to have given to Ireland Finn and Oisín and Oscar, the most beloved heroes of the land. The barony of Lune in Meath still bears the name of the famous native warrior fighters of the north Laigin, the Luaigni, who confronted Conchobor mac Nessa at Rosnaree, defeated his heroes one after another in the fight, almost routed his army, and only when their own king fell in single combat consented to abandon the field. It was held that from an ancient people—the Tuath Tabhairn—came the northern champion and hero of the epic of the *Táin*, Cú Chulainn himself, "thou little elf," the "small dark man." In Mumu were a people known as Érainn or Ivernians. Men of the race of Nemed, the Fir Bolg or "men of leather bags," kept their land from Galway to Inishowen; and gradually in later centuries writers found their name used for the whole of the pre-Gaelic peoples in Ireland, even including the Picts. Connachta was divided among many peoples; the race of the Fir Domnann gave their name to its early lists of kings.

Besides these racial divisions certain ancient communities seem to have represented industrial groups (2). The Fir-Iboth or Ibdaig along the lower Shannon and surrounding districts were probably a fisher caste living on fish and milk. The "rivet-folk," near the Dési territory in Mumu where copper-mines were worked, seem to have been copper-smiths who paid their tribute in copper. The "smith-folk" lay in the copper-producing lands of west Cork, the district of Béarra, bordering on Berehaven. The "people of helmets," and the "people of shields," to be found in Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, Kerry (regarded in old tradition as specially Ivernian), were probably employed in making battle-gear. It is possible that other instances of occupation castes occur in the names of the "people of mantles," "plough folk," "chariot folk," "curd folk," "herb folk," "weight or balance folk." All alike seem to have been rent-paying groups, whose vassal tributes may have

been paid by the products of their industries. In the organization, tradition, and practice of these occupation communities, retaining from old time even to the early Christian period their ancient government, often under their own lines of chiefs, we may find the secret of the extraordinary development of industries and trade, and above all the vigour of art, which distinguished the old Irish world before and after the coming of the Gaels.

The older peoples survived, not as a promiscuous swarm of conquered slaves, but living in communities under their ancient dynastic lines, and preserving in large measure their own organization and subdivisions. We can trace them throughout the country in the petty kingdoms or states called in Irish *tuatha*:—(1) the *soerthuatha* or independent kingdoms directly ruled by Celtic lords and therefore not subject to tribute; (2) the *fortuatha*, states which were perhaps mostly Celtic as regards not their general population but their dynastic families (for example in Mide all states not immediately ruled by the Uí Neill were *fortuatha* of the Uí Neill); (3) the *aithechthuatha*, vassal groups who inhabited the territories of the ruling *tuatha* as a class, not as political communities. The dominant dynastic families and nobility were of the foreign race, or Celtic, even in the north-east, where a whole population of Pictish stock was ruled by kings and nobles of Celtic origin. We find no trace of religious animosity in old days. Far from abolishing the rites and learning which they found in Ireland the new-comers respected the religion and memorials of the ancient race, and seem to have adopted much from the people they conquered. The cemeteries of the earlier heroes were still centres of the solemn festivals of the *tuatha*. The druids still continued as teachers and interpreters of nature worship and of natural law. It is believed that this remarkable and truly learned order had its home in the British islands, whence they passed into Gaul: they were not known among the Celts of Italy, Spain, the Danube, or Asia

Minor. After they had disappeared from south Britain they were still found among the Picts of Alba and in Ireland. The Gaulish druids known to Caesar superintended sacrifices as experts in divination: "They (the Gauls) never sacrifice without a druid present," says one Greek writer, "without a philosopher," says another—clearly implying that the druids were not the celebrants. They served as judges, professors, augurs, and magicians. In Ireland they were not judges, and no text, pagan or Christian, speaks of their presiding at sacrifices: we hear of them only as prophets, philosophers, teachers, and wonder-workers learned in the secrets of natural forces.

By the time of Caesar the Celtic conquest in the British islands was practically complete. Masters and leaders in the new civilization, in road-making and tillage, in transport and trade, in weapons for battle and conquest, they not only held Britain but dominated nearly all Alba by wide settlements in its southern regions, which in their turn sustained the outlying colonies in the north. In Ireland the Celts had at that time reached as far as the northern sea, while for two hundred years to come they were still extending throughout the island the area of their actual settlements. The ancient story of the Dési migration tells of the *féni* taking possession of a territory now unknown, Fid Mór, "the great forest"; and there is evidence of a forcible seizure of a forest region at a far later time, Fid Manach near Tuam, after a massacre of its Pictish chiefs. The famous tale of queen Medb illustrates one method of their advance. Medb was a "matriarch" of the Pictish race, who was married first to the Celtic king Conchobor of the Ulaid, and after to Ailill of the Connachta. It is evident that the Pictish law of maternal government must have facilitated the Celts in extending their sway. By marrying their princes to Pictish queens they would gain a foothold peacefully, and could then set aside the old custom, and assert their own law of male succession.

The mixed respect and fear which the rulers felt for the fighting qualities of the subject peoples appears in the epic of the *Táin*, the "Cattle Raid of Cualnge," where we see in the first century the "Five Fifths" maintained behind their old boundaries, although already they had passed under the domination of Celtic kings whether by marriage or by conquest. In the great expedition of Táin Bó Cualnge four great Fifths had joined to invade the Ulaid. Medb reviewing the assembled host recognized the Galian troops from the middle lands as excelling all the rest. "This enterprise," said she, "will be a barren one for all of us except for one force alone, the Galians of the Laigin." "Why blamest thou these men?" said her consort. "Blame them we do not," replied Medb. "What good service then have they done that they are praised above the rest?" said Ailill. "There is reason to praise them," said Medb. "They are splendid soldiers," said she; "when the rest are beginning to make their pens and pitch their camp, the Galians have already finished setting their booths and huts. When the rest are still building booths and huts, the Galians have finished preparing their food and drink. While the others are getting ready their food and drink, the Galians have done eating and feasting, and their harps are playing for them. When all the others have finished eating and feasting, by that time the Galians are asleep. . . . . It is folly then for the rest to go, for the Galians will enjoy the victory." "What is to be done to them?" said Ailill. "To kill them," said Medb. "We will not hide that this is a woman's plan," said Ailill. But Medb would neither have them go with the army to win themselves victory, nor stay behind and conquer the Connachta. "We shall take care," said Fergus, "that the Galians shall be no danger to us." And he took and divided their forces among the rest so that not five of them were in one place together (3).

King Conchobor marched to the Shannon, but having failed to recover the Brown Bull from Connacht or to

exact reparations from the other provinces, he in a few years summoned the Ulaid for a war of vengeance. Four Fifths once more gathered their hosts, the king of each Fifth summoning his men to meet him at the royal fort of the Province. Cairbre Nia Fear, ruler over the north Laigin, named after him "Cairbre's Fifth," called out his men to meet him at Tara. His brother, Find Fili, king of the south Laigin, ordered the great company of the Galians to Dinn Ríg on the Barrow. Eochu mac Luchta, king of Mumu, held his gathering at Temair Érann. The muster of Connacht was held by Ailill and Medb at Crúachu (4). In the great battle of Rosnaree on the Boyne when four Fifths measured their strength against the Ulaid, the Celtic kings again led to war the tributary chiefs of the pre-Celtic peoples, superb in pride, in splendour of equipment, in chivalry, in mighty feats of battle, but subdued to the bidding of the conquering race.

Like the later predatory Normans, the Celts were "citizens of the world," with no national predilections. They had, however, one supreme advantage, a conquering speech. Their language spread over the whole country so that by the time of S. Patrick no one in Ireland remembered that there had ever been any other speech there, and no traces of it can now be discovered. If the Celts won their original triumph as the bringers of an iron civilization, their final success was assured by their adaptability, and their lively recognition of the native talents displayed by the peoples among whom they settled. Ireland had abundance of bog-iron easily obtained and worked, and the mines of Leitrim were of great antiquity, for there by old tradition the Tuatha dé Danann had first descended from heaven, giving to Slíab in Íarainn its peculiar sanctity. Among the old races skilled craftsmen, as we may still see in the Dublin Museum, proved their talent. Old forms of design and decoration became merged in the rich ornament of La Tène and the Marne. In the first century of the

Christian era we see established in Ireland a society, aristocratic, wealthy, luxurious, where skilled metal-workers and enamellers and dyers shewed the splendour of their art in the adornment of the nobles, the magnificence of their arms and raiments, the trappings of their horses and chariots, the dishes and goblets for their feasts. We may well believe that the centuries of conquest were less occupied by war than by a great development of wealth under a militant aristocracy, not only in the riches of the soil, but in commerce.

Never was there a society of greater pride, of larger boasts, of a more exacting chivalry in the hero. The warrior's valour and agility, his personal beauty, the splendour of his outfit, his fidelity to his pledged word, were sung by poets and blazoned from court to court. Never, on the other hand, were contrasts in life more extreme. Successive invasions had brought together varied types of peoples into an island where ancestral traditions and racial habits of the old time and the new survived in sharp contrast within a narrow space. Side by side peoples of ancient and modern civilizations practised their several customs. The Celtic gods were in some sort allied to those of the peoples in the European Continent: a more primitive worship, now wholly lost to us, was practised by the pre-Celtic races. The Celts followed by law the social system of patriarchal monogamy common to the Indo-European peoples; while the Picts, belonging to an older and more barbaric world, preserved very ancient marriage customs, counted descent by the mother only, and ruled inheritance and social life by this system of "matriarchy." In the few notices of the island which remain in foreign writers there is the usual perplexity and confusion of traditional fables as to "barbarians," and fantastic tales carried by seafarers who never got beyond the port of call, and whose imagination was caught by wonder-stories of strange races (5). Delusions and prejudices of rumour and tradition, differing in time and circumstance, but

not less remarkable in fact, have been known in our own day.

Down to the Christian era, both Britain and Ireland were regarded on the Continent as Pictish (Pretanic) rather than Celtic countries. The earliest notice of Ireland is by a Greek, Poseidonius, about 150 B.C. From that time till about 200 A.D. nine writers, Greek and Roman, mentioned the island, with stories of half-naked cannibals in a land of unknown size, and of "wintry" and "ice-bound" climate; where there was no food but for cattle, and so much for them that unless restrained they burst from over-eating—a land where men were ignorant, not only of all the virtues, but of natural affection—a land where there were no snakes or bees, and birds were rare. The first real interest of the Romans was awakened by the imperial prospect of conquest, when Agricola about 80 A.D. received one of its petty kings, and conceived the idea that Ireland could be subdued and held by a single legion of Roman soldiers, and that all notion of freedom among barbarians could be ended if the military power of the Roman Empire were extended to the last verge of the western world, the uttermost outpost of savage independence in the illimitable ocean. The dream of conquest faded, but commerce continued. Seafaring traders in the second century carried to Ptolemy the Geographer the names of sixteen peoples or states on the eastern or southern coasts of Ireland, with estuaries and havens and "cities"—old sites it may be of fairs and assemblies, where wooden houses and bothies were ranged in ordered lines for the concourse of the fair; as, for example, the *Oenach Descirt Maige*—"the Assembly of the South of the Plain," probably the plain Muirthemne in the district of Dundalk.

Few of Ptolemy's names can be identified, but they indicate the course of traffic in his time. Along the east coats from the port of the Slaney to Larne there were many harbours, Dún Étair (Howth) the most famous

of them in early tradition. A very early commerce grew up in the river estuaries of the Ulaid north of the Boyne—the Dee, the Muirthemne plain, Mag Inis, and the havens of Lough Cúan. Roman coins of the early Emperors have been found as far north as Antrim. The wines of the south and the wares of the Mediterranean reached Ireland, as well as the west continental trade through Scandinavia. In the old Sagas the traditional tales of the chariot drives, of the wanderings of men, the march of armies, the political combinations, show that lines of communication had been opened throughout the island, and for traffic over-sea. The rich eastern country of fertile fields and rivers and harbours was traversed by the famous "Road of the Court," which ran from Tallaght across the Dodder to the Ford of Hurdles over the Liffey, and past Benn Étair through Brega by Lusk to Tara. In the most ancient traditions of victory over the primeval forest, with the clearing of the plains, the eruption of rivers, the appearance of lakes, and the erection of forts, the last triumph is the "discovery of the principal roads not observed till then" in an Ireland become conscious of its unity and strength.

The name by which Ireland was known to the ancients —Irish, British, Greeks, and Romans alike—seems to go back to a common root, from which have come the various words familiar to us, Iverni, Hiberni, Iverio, Ériu. A Greek writer of 150 B.C. used the word Iverne. A century later Caesar called the island Hibernia, and the Celtic adjective Ivernos confused with the Latin word Hibernus or "wintry" gave to the Romans the notion of an arctic land, so that Hibernia came to signify to them a gloomy and melancholy "ice-bound Hiverne." In letters of Columbanus about 600 A.D. he speaks of his own people as *Iberi*.

We may remember in old times a like difficulty for foreigners to find a name for the larger island to the east. The Greeks used the word Albion, which was

handed on through Pliny and Ptolemy to mediæval writers, and was ultimately used mainly for the modern Scotland: the origin of the name is lost. The more successful word Britanni or Britannia first appeared under Julius Caesar, and grew out of a confusion between the name of the "Britanni," a small group of the Belgae near the mouth of the Somme, and the "Pretani" or Picts. The early names of the two islands alike enshrine the memory of ancient peoples who had built up their first civilizations. In the coming centuries when a new world was made, and a distinctly Irish civilization was created by the gradual union of all the peoples of the common land of Erin, the dominant influence was Celtic. As we have seen, the language of the conquerors was universally imposed, whether by force or more probably by consent, and so completely did the old tongue disappear that nothing certain remains of it save a few river names. It would however be wrong to imply that the etymology of all words in Irish is known, and known to be Celtic, which is far from being the case. For all we know, many of our common words may be of pre-Celtic origin.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER II.

(1) P. 27. For the early settlements see Eoin MacNeill: "Early Irish Population Groups," pp. 99 *seq.* (*R.I.A.* XXIX, c. 4). Also MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 6, 7.
(2) P. 28. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 74–76, 82.
(3) P. 31. Winifred Faraday: "Táin Bo Cuailnge," pp. 7, 8.
(4) P. 32. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 104 *seq.*
(5) P. 33 *Ib.* pp. 133 *seq.*

CHAPTER III

UISNECH AND TARA

In the first years of the Christian era the supremacy of the Celts was so firmly established that the conflicts told in the old Sagas were not battles between the invaders and the older peoples, but between the rival Celtic kings themselves. The Connachta, in the least fertile, and in early times undoubtedly the most densely peopled land, having successfully defied the Ulaid, took the lead in aggressive war to establish their hegemony. History shows that regions just sufficiently fertile to maintain a prolific race of men have always sent out swarms into other countries, as for example the Germanic migrations that overthrew the Roman Empire. In the case of the Connachta an additional factor was the large proportion of inhabitants conquered but not politically assimilated by the Celts. These, like the Galians and the Luaigni of the middle lands, furnished abundance of fighting men who had no political right to exemption from military service—conscripts in fact. Fer Diad, the bravest of Medb's followers, was of the Fir Domnann who, with the Fir Bolg and the Galians, are classed by the old historian Mael Muru as the principal folks of his time who are not Góidil. In any case the Connachta were aggressors in invasions and wars for the possession of the Brown Bull of Cualgne, and stood as leaders of all the kingdoms of Ireland south of the Boyne. "I had fifteen hundred mercenaries, sons of banished men from other lands," boasted Medb (1), "and as many more sons of freemen in my own land": a company which she reckoned as the mere nucleus of an incredible host.

"These were as a standing household guard. . . . hence hath my father bestowed one of the five provinces of Erin upon me, even the province of Cruachan; wherefore 'Medb of Cruachan' am I called." A century later the Connachta were still first in power and in ambition. There is a tradition from about 130 A.D. of a rising of the rent-paying peoples, or *aithechthuatha*, the only recorded revolt against the domination of the Celtic lords; they raised one of their own race, Cairbre of the Cat's Head, chief of the Luaigni, to be ruler and king for twenty years. A princess of the Connachta fled to Britain at the insurrection, and there Tuathal was born, sixth in descent from the father of queen Medb. As a young man he returned to Ireland, overthrew the remnants of the insurgents, and reigned in triumph, Tuathal Techtmar or the Possessor (*c.* 150–175). "A lord over all lords is Tuathal Techtmar, and a sea that is poured forth as a flood"—so ran the praise of him in the ninth century when enthusiasm for nationality and ancient records was at its height (2). He opened a new era in Irish history by his march from Crúachu, breaking through the ancient boundaries of the Five Great Fifths of Ireland to make for himself a new kingdom. In his conquering march eastward he crossed the old dividing line of the Shannon. Setting a royal fort on the hill of Uisnech at the Rock of Division—Ail na Mírenn—(by cutting off according to an impossible legend a section from each of the Fifths), he established for himself a small domestic realm in the centre of the island. From the low broad hill of Uisnech covered with rich grass to the top—a noble camping ground for kings—we overlook the wide undulating plain, with encircling hills crowned by the remains of innumerable forts. Here was the land commemorated by the poet-historian of the eleventh century—"Gentle Mide of the corn measures," "Mide of the steeds," "Mide homeland of Conn's race, seat of the race of victorious Niall, heart of many-coloured Banba, Mide plain of the great troops" (3).

The Connachta were perhaps less shaken than the other provinces by twenty years of revolution, and had still strength for conquest; while the breaking of Cairbre of the Cat's Head marked the failure of the chief fighting tribe of the north Laigin. Possibly the folk-memory of the ancient peoples inspired the tradition that it was Tuathal who first imposed on them the heavy tribute known as the *bóroma* (4), whether in vengeance for the revolt of the subject peoples, or as a memorial of the march of the Connachta kings over the first vanquished province. Fighting filled all his days. From his forefathers he inherited tradition of war with the Ulaid. In the insurrection of the ancient races the Picts had apparently overthrown Celtic ascendancy in the north, and it was they who now ruled the territories through which Tuathal marched, Cú Chulainn's patrimony of Muirthemne and the land of Cualgne. His death was in battle with king Mál far north in the Glens of Antrim, at the place where the great tomb of Carndo stands.

Through the hundred and fifty years after the taking of Uisnech, the kindred of the Dál Cuinn or Connachta, one king after another, fell in battle with the eastern Ulaid, or in fighting along the Boyne valley for possession of the great road by the Gap of the North into the land of the Red Branch. But it is only names of kings that float before us, mere shadows indeed rather than names. Conn of the Hundred Battles, said to have reigned in the second century A.D., survives in poems and tradition, but nothing is known of him. What old wandering legend may lie behind the mention by the poet Fearghal Macan Bhaird in 1609 of "Conn of Cnoc Maisden" (5) (Mullaghmast), and of master-poets in those days? A tale lingers that he warred against the king of Mumu, Mug Nuadat, till he forced him to a division of Ireland between them along the Esker Riada, a ridge of natural sandhills which runs from Dublin to Galway, leaving Leth Cuinn to the north as Conn's Half, and Leth Moga as Mug's Half. This division enters

also into the fable of the sons of "Milesius," Éber and Eremón, who had made the same partition some time after the Deluge. But the Esker ridge was never in fact a dividing line in Ireland; the northern battle area east of the Shannon was from first to last along the valley of the Boyne; the more southern conflicts swept back and forwards across the uplands from Donard in Wicklow to the Slieve Bloom Mountains that parted the rivers of the south from those that flowed north. Another legend of the "discovery" at Conn's birth of five principal roads leading to Tara represents the glorious place of Conn of the Hundred Battles in old Irish tradition. The prehistoric monuments of the Boyne valley point to its holding the chief place in Ireland in very remote times. It is quite possible that just as Brían Bórama encamped on Tara centuries after the high-kings had ceased to dwell there, so the early Connachta kings had in their minds some remotely ancient tradition of supreme rule seated in the lands of Tailtiu and Tara. There is little doubt that the plain of Brega was in far-off prehistoric times the home of the most advanced civilization in Ireland. Thus the old legends may carry in them historic truth. The Connachta kings were steadily looking from Uisnech to Tara, the centre of their future overlordship; and the Celts, skilled in road-making, may have begun to lay down for the march of their armies one or more of the roads that in early times struck across the island from Galway Bay to the Liffey and the Boyne along the dry ground of the sand ridges. To warrior kings a military road to Tara was a strategic necessity, and a road by the coast to the Gap of the North.

King Cormac mac Airt, fourth in descent from Tuathal, probably reigning about 275 A.D., stands out in tradition beyond all the rest (6). A late account speaks of Connacht as under the rule of non-Celtic peoples up to the time of Cormac mac Airt, who is described as having conquered it for the Celts. To him fell the glory of the

final advance from Uisnech to Tara. Strong fort and centre of a powerful fighting race, the conquest of the Hill meant their subjection. From the plain of Brega can be seen from far the gentle eminence of Tara, on whose wide green surface a vast encampment might be spread. Its hosts would never lack food from the surrounding fields, the richest in Ireland. From the estuaries of the Boyne hard by and of the other rivers of the plain, traders could carry the wealth of the overseas traffic, salt and iron and wine. For the winning of such a prize Cormac put forth all his strength and his craft. But of the subsequent wars that pushed back the boundary of the Ulaid behind the Boyne and Blackwater, put an end to the dynasty of the north Laigin, and gave the rich plain of Brega, from the Liffey to the mountains beyond Dundalk, to the Connachta kings of Uisnech, we have only the hint given in the imperfect fragment of a story of the battle of Crinna near Mellifont (7). Cormac had waged war against the Ulaid, but the hostages he had carried away, even as they sat in the honourable fashion prescribed at his table, grossly mocked him, setting fire to his beard; the Ulaid defied him in a new war, and Cormac hard-pressed was driven back for refuge to Connacht. There he levied a fresh army, and secured the aid of Tadhg mac Céin. Before the decisive battle of Crinna a compact was made. Tadhg and his followers were to deliver battle according to the formal rules of a duel in later times. If he were victorious Cormac was to grant him as much land as he could ride round in his chariot on the day of victory. Tadhg attacked and routed the Ulaid, and claimed his reward. Sorely wounded he was placed in Cormac's own chariot. "Whenever Tadhg shall swoon away, *gilla*," said Cormac to his charioteer, "do thou then turn the chariot's head eastward again." "The freedom of thy children and of thy race for ever if to Tadhg thou give not either Tailtiu or Tara." So the chariot went, turning east whenever Tadhg fainted. When he roused

himself to ask :—" Have we brought in Tara ? " always the answer was, " Not yet." At nightfall he must have been driven along the Court Road past the Ford of Hurdles and Benn Edair towards Tallaght. " Good now, *gilla*," he asked, " what river is this ? " " Verily it is the Liffey." " *Gilla*, have we brought away Tara and Tailtiu ? " " We have not." " That is an ill thing indeed, neither shall it ever profit thee "—and Tadhg almost dying drew his sword and slew the corrupted charioteer.

Tadhg's reward was a strip of land along the coast from the Liffey ford to Ardee, and from the sea a broad stretch north of Tailtiu to Lough Ramor, leaving Tara in the angle between the two lines to king Cormac. We have no account, save in this late and imperfect story, to explain how Tara and the surrounding territory of Brega south of the Boyne passed from the north Laigin into possession of the kings of Connacht and Uisnech ; nor of how and why the border of the northern Fifth was pushed beyond the Boyne to Ardee, and the Laigin frontier to the Liffey and the Rye. Cormac's new territory was in course of time occupied by border colonies who claimed descent from Niall or from Tadhg, and the old Fifth of the north Laigin disappeared with the loss of their ancient capital.

The reign of Cormac was regarded in our earliest annals as an epoch in Irish history. Ancient boundaries had been crossed and demolished. The period of the Five equal Kings was closed. One of the many later poetic names of Tara, " Cormac's Hill," shows possibly a long tradition of Cormac himself as high-king on the Hill—that it was he who established in its first dim form the central monarchy in the middle land—the high-kingship consecrated by the " coming to Tara " of every new *ardrí*, which after a thousand years had not lost its hold on the hearts of the Irish people. But it was not only as man of war and conqueror that Cormac's wide authority was remembered. A deeper and more

enduring sense of change is shown in the tradition that looked back to him as the source of a new order. Of Ireland, it was said, Cormac made a land of promise, free from theft and violence, without perplexity in the matter of meat or raiment. Great were his power and control over the men of Ireland, seeing that none of them dared abstain from work save on plea of military service to Cormac. It was told of him that his pity for the toil of a slave-woman caused him to set up the first water-mill in this island. In the world there was not a king like Cormac, for he it was that excelled in form, in figure, and in vesture; in size, in justice, and in equity. It was he who in due time constructed in Tara the noblest building. Nor, though he was opposed by the Ulaid, and even according to one account twice deposed by them, was he ever divorced from his kingdom. He was remembered in legend as munificent patron of hospitality and the arts. "The Laigin had a cauldron of hospitality named Buichet. . . . After that Cormac gave him all his eyesight reached from the rampart of Kells, both cow and human being, and gold and silver, and alehouse, to the end of a week. 'The music of Buichet's house' to the companies, that is, his cheery laugh to the companies: 'Welcome to you: it is well for you: ye will be a benefit unto us!' The music of the fifty heroes with their purple garments and with their robes to delight (them) when the companies were cupshotten. The music of the fifty maidens in their purple mantles, with their golden-yellow hair over their garments, and their song and their burden and their music delighting the host. The music of the fifty harpers thereafter till morning, a-soothing the host with melody. Wherefore thence is 'The Music of Buichet's House.'" (8)

Cormac also appeared as a great judge, as a maker of laws enlarged and revised for the benefit of the whole country—a natural eulogy of the first high-king whose broad council of nobles and druids could give a national character to an

agreed code of law, so that the old Irish laws known as the laws of the *féni* came to be often called the *féni* of Tara. He was celebrated as the definer of boundaries and meares of the country from sea to sea, and of the duties of a hierarchy of kings and sub-kings. He was supposed to have compiled a book of precepts that established manners, morals, and government in the kingdom. As ruler from Tara "Cormac the Wise," or "the Law-giver," remained the highest symbol in old times of conquering and organizing power. Legend claimed him as the first visionary who saw another faith rising above the teaching of the druids, and ordered that his burial should not be at the Brugh, because it was not one and the same god that he and they that were sepulchred therein adored; but he prescribed his burial at Ros na Ríg, with his face set eastward to the rising of the sun (9). So too the reverence of later ages admitted Conchobor mac Nessa and Finn mac Cumail to the revelation of the true God. It is clear, however, that in Cormac's time and for two centuries later, till 483 A.D., the kings of Tara were in fact carried to burial with their kindred the kings of Connacht at Crúachu. When a king at Tara died the king of Connacht automatically took his place, and a new king for Connacht was elected from the Dál Cuinn; and it was not till the time of Niall and his son Loeguire that they were laid in the cemetery of the Boyne in the company of the ancient gods.

There was long war before the new boundaries of kingdoms were defined. The heavy tribute of the *bóroma* levied on the Laigin was the source of bitter and ceaseless strife, and the old fighting races maintained a struggle for the independence of their province which was not crushed for centuries to come. On Tuathal's death at the "battle moor," Mál assumed the rule and lifted the tribute. Feidlimid, called the Rechtaid or the Legist, again levied it. Art, son of Conn, never secured it without a battle. Cormac mac Airt lifted it. Cairbre Liffeachair led a general muster of the northern

half, but the whole north could not make shift to raise the tax. Meanwhile the Ulaid stood entrenched behind their border line from sea to sea, deeply protected by lakes and forest, by bog and low rounded hills intersected by sinuous valleys of swamp—the hills that Owen Roe O'Neill some thirteen centuries later called his "royal allies"; while to strengthen yet further these natural barriers a stupendous line of defence was raised from Newry to the great lakes and thence to Donegal bay—a massive earthen rampart with fosses on either side some twelve feet deep, generally margined by outer banks, and defended on the north by hut-shelters and strong posts (10). There were only two natural roads of entry into the Province for an army of any size—the western way by Sligo along the sea-coast, and the way from Brega by Dundalk through the Gap of the North. In this line of greatest danger was the most formidable barrier of defence. A vast fortified enclosure west of Slieve Gullion, in the valley of the Dorsey river—the Dorsey, "the town of the gates," or "the gate of the Fews"—protected the Gap of the North: a foss twenty-three feet deep and twelve feet wide at the base guarded the camp, with an outer trench five feet deep and eighteen feet wide (the huge earthworks at Scarva, now known as "the Danes' Cast," were probably no part of the older vallation, but erected by the Ulaid after they had been driven eastward). Behind their great Dyke of one hundred and thirty miles the Ulaid stood at bay, secure in the scheme of fortification they may have learned in the wars of the Roman Wall; and all the battles of the Tara kings were fought along its line or to the south of it. We cannot wonder that there was a pause of some fifty years in the further advance north of the Connachta conquerors (*c.* 270–320).

In the midst of these disturbances and wars along old frontiers other changes had happened in Ireland. If the

island had never been engulfed in the Roman Empire, it was not for that reason shut out from the general movement and society of peoples. In the third century Gaulish soldiers were among the Dési, and as tradition tells many more may have entered the service of Irish kings (11). The Romans began to know something about the Irish after 200 A.D., when these appeared as invaders of Britain itself: a Latin panegyric on Constantius Caesar, 297 A.D., remarks that the Britons were already "accustomed" to Irish raids on the northern frontier. Organized bands of fighting men under military leaders—the early *fiana* or fenians—sailed from Ireland to the war-belt along the Great Wall, and returned with their plunder and slaves to take service under kings and chiefs at home. They were joined in Alba by Irish settlers in the Cantire peninsula, and in Argyle and the islands. Pirate boats from across the sea raided the Severn valley. Irish warriors crossed to Gaul, and fought with Gauls and Romans against the incoming barbarians. Whenever men-of-arms on any side were wanted adventurers from Ireland were found, known to the Latins as Picts and Scots and Atecotti (12). The first mention of the Picts seems to have been those of Galloway and north Pictland, or Scotland, in 297 A.D. as raiders on the British. "Scotti" or "Scots" was from the fourth century the Latin name for the Irish: in Roman Britain down to the fall of the Western Empire the "Scot with wandering dagger" appears always as a fighter, and Dr. MacNeill suggests that the word meant "a raider," and may have been first given to the Irish soldiers or free-booters in Britain or Gaul. The Atecotti, spoken of as "a warlike nation," were apparently distinct from both Scots and Picts—probably conquered men of the very ancient primitive races, who became grouped in plundering hosts of stout warriors drawn from no particular nation or tribe: possibly their name, like that of the Scotti, was given to them in Britain or Gaul. On the Continent Scotti and Atecotti alike took service under Roman

commanders. At the end of the fourth century Stilicho enlisted Irish troops for the defence of the Rhine against the Goths. Latin inscriptions tell of the "Primi Scotti," a military force in the Imperial service along the Rhine and in Roman Gaul. There were also cohorts or regiments of the Atecotti serving both in the western and eastern Empire. In the west they were named after the emperor Honorius Honoriani, or in Celtic form Honoriaci. Some of them in 409 held the passes of the Pyrenees, and according to Orosius made common cause with the Germans, and shared with them the invasion and partition of Spanish territory, until the Goths appeared and established their rule over all.

From the earliest time therefore after the settlement of the Celts, men of Ireland were soldiers and wanderers over Europe, notorious among the Romans both as enemies and as defenders of the Empire; like later generations they were hardy in food and lofty in demeanour, if we may judge from the description "swelled out with the porridge of the Irish." The universal wars that preluded the dissolution of the Empire marked a time when, as Dr. MacNeill points out, the possession of iron and of iron weapons for all peoples, Celts, Germans, Slavs, Turanians, gave opportunity for "an overflowing population and war-like arms for all." Irish soldiers were found in the fighting-line on every frontier from the Great Wall to the Pyrenees. In the battle-fields of Europe they joined in raids on provinces enfeebled by the Imperial policy of destroying national vigour, so as to make of the peoples not allies but slaves of the military authority. Irish tradition agrees with accounts drawn from foreign sources. According to its story four Irish kings were engaged in Continental wars—Eochaid, 358–366; Crimthann, 366–379; Niall, 379–405; Nath Í, 405–428. The last two died abroad, Niall south of the Isle of Wight in the final disorders before the Roman armies quitted Britain; Nath Í on the European Continent, perhaps in Gaul.

Thus it was that mercenary troops now first appeared in Ireland. The over-seas raids, the Roman wars of empire, the Irish wars for the new shaping of territories—all these upheavals at home and abroad cast loose on Ireland a new multitude of wanderers. There were banished men, hapless victims of the Celtic pressure, exiles seeking new homes; there were outlawed men for crimes of violence; there were bold adventurers for the prizes of the world—champions and heroes; all alike driven to sell their services to some powerful chief whether in their own land or another. Armed bands of desperate wanderers trained to war as their only profession were equally ready to take service as mercenaries with any chief who paid their price, or to carry on private war and plunder on their own account. Trained bodies of Scots and Picts who harassed the Romans along the Great Wall were known as *fiana*, and *fian* came to mean any single roving warrior band on the war-path, and finally simply a host or troop. Picts and Celts who fought at the Great Wall against Rome had probably brought back to the north the plan of frontier fortification by the Great Dyke, and of a Roman camp such as was established at the "Dorsey." From raids and border wars they returned, picked men disciplined and organized, serving under their own captains, knowing something of the Roman manner of warfare and military organization. There were other drifting companies who had been squeezed out of their own lands by the rapid increase of the conquering race, such as the Dési or "vassal communities" round Tara, possibly of the famous fighting tribe of the Luaigni who emigrated or were pushed out of their lands by Cormac. One body of the banished in the fifth century entered the service of Oengus, king of Mumu, and were established on lands they conquered for him from Ossory on either side of the Suir. Another company of the Uí Liatháin (according to the witness of Nennius and Cormac's Glossary) crossed the sea and settled in southern Wales, where the descend

ants of their princes still held sway in the eighth century. A story remains of the vindictive banishment from their patrimony in South Mumu of a whole community, the Dartraige, for their pernicious resistance to Cashel and the Gael. According to some accounts Finn was of this tribe. Forty years they were in banishment through the length and breadth of Ireland—five hundred armed men was their strength. The provincial kings in turn hired them, but not more than three years were they on any one land till their misdeeds prevailed against them, for the "land that they sucked to themselves, and for their turbulence, their rudeness, and their so frequent brawls and fights in set assemblies, in conventions, and in every other meeting whatsoever, (so that) the said provincial kings would weary of them" (13).

Fighting men were thus at hand for the use of conquering kings, for chiefs whose boundaries were broken, for everyone who needed soldiers ready at all times for service when the levies of the little kingdoms could not be called out beyond their few summer weeks of legal service. The roving fighters and hunters could hire themselves out to princes who paid their price, or they could make war on their own account. It was in this new and turbulent Ireland that arose the famous tradition of the *fiana* and their glorious leaders—of Finn mac Cumail, of Goll son of Morna, of Oisín, of Oscar, of Diarmuid (14). The heroes of popular song in the new world were no longer champions of the *Táin* tradition, a boastful aristocracy vaunting their supremacy of rule, their horses and chariots and gorgeous trappings. These were plain foot-soldiers out of every province and townland of all Ireland. No tax seems to have been levied for their support. In war they lived on the soldiers' prey. In peace they supported themselves as mighty hunters. "Copious were the profits and wage of Finn and the *fiana*. But great prerogatives as these were, yet greater by far were the pains and hardships which in return lay on them to fend off and to repel from Ireland

oversea aggressors, thievry and enterprise of outlaws, with all other villainy. So that 'twas much of wearing work the *fiana* had to safeguard Ireland." Finn mac Cumail with his kindred, Oisín, Oscar, and the rest, was the centre both of heroic adventures and of almost every faery legend from that time till now—Finn of the ancient race, "not of the Gaedhil," by tradition of the old Galians. He outshone in glory Cú Chulainn and the mighty men of Emain Macha, and became the national hero of all Ireland, and the centre of deathless traditions of the perfect pagan warrior. Finn was said to have been chief of the household to Cormac and master of his hunting; and kept his state at his camping place of Almain, on the north-west side of the Curragh, with his gentles and chief nobles close beside him at the banquets, and ever "little Cnú, nut of my heart," (15) the dwarf whom Finn had for harping and chanting of tunes and songs. "Thus it was he and they used to pass the year: from Beltene to Samain in hunting and in deeds of venery; from Samain to Beltene again in the prescribed keeping of all Ireland." Every state and people had its own gallant adventurers; and the fame of all went to swell the glorious record of Ireland their home.

To Cormac the saying is given that the *fiana* "without overbearing" were among the institutions which were best for a community (16). The advantage of a standing force ever at his command was obvious, to secure his new authority and check the power of the old warlike communities. On the other hand, provincial wars were made more formidable by *fiana* levied in the several kingdoms, adopting the cause of peoples of the ancient Fifths in revolt against the Tara kings. According to early Irish tradition, Fothod was leader in Finn's time of a *fian* of the Fir Bolg of Connacht. In the next generation the son of Cormac Cas of Mumu led a *fian* into Brega to defend Leth Moga against the war of the high-king Cairbre son of Cormac (279–297 A.D.), called Liffechair, "the lover of the Liffey," from the place of

his fosterage and the scene of his father's triumph. After the conquest of the Fifth of the northern Laigin, the Liffey formed part of the boundary of the southern Laigin, and Cairbre held to all the land on its northern side. His death in battle at Skreen near Tara was attributed to another *fian* led by Oscar son of Oisín whom he himself killed in the fight of Gabra.

The first breaking of the border line of the Ulaid by Cormac was soon followed by an assault of the Connachta on the northern Fifth. According to tradition the king of Tara, Fiacha Sraibtine (*c.* 297–327), gave command of his wars in Mumu to his son Muiredach. But Muiredach's good success alarmed Fiacha's brothers, the three Collas, who feared that if on Fiacha's death his popular son were chosen king, the house of the Collas would be cut out of the line of succession. While Muiredach was fighting in the south, therefore, they hurriedly raised an army to overthrow Fiacha, and secure at once the monarchy for one of themselves. Fiacha's druid gave the king a choice of ills. "You can be victorious; if you are, the kingship will pass from your son and your descendants. But if you are defeated and slain, your son and your posterity will rule Ireland." "Then will I choose defeat and death," said the king—a choice which in Dr. MacNeill's words remains "the symbol in Irish story of the Triumph of Failure." Near Tailtiu, at the confluence of the Blackwater and the Boyne, Fiacha fell slain in battle by the Collas. The wrath of the country drove them into banishment, and Muiredach reigned at Tara (17).

Out of this tragedy arose the next great advance of the Connachta kings. "We will go back to Ireland," the Collas said in their exile, "and lay down our lives for our crime." Muiredach received them with peace: "No revenge shall follow you." After this they spoke to him one day and said: "Though thou and we are at

peace our sons will grow up and contend with thy sons for the kingship. Give us a kingdom for ourselves and our posterity." "It shall be so," said the king. "What part of Ireland will you give us?" said they. "The Ulidians," said the king, "have ever been hostile towards me and towards our fathers. Go and conquer their kingdom and it shall be yours." Upon which Colla Uais, Colla Menn, and Colla dá Chrích, proceeded to raise an army in their home-land, and with this Connacht host invaded the Ulaid, defeated their warriors, and slew the last king of Emain Macha at Carn Achaid, probably Carnagh on the borders of Monaghan and Armagh, in a pass traversed by the new railway from Castleblayney to Keady. By seizing this pass the Collas would turn the flank of the Dorsey and Slíab Fúait defences, and the way to Emain Macha would lie open (Farney is now the southern part of Monaghan, but the ancient *Fernmag* was much more extensive and probably included most of the county). The defeated Ulaid, cut off from Emain, were forced to retreat eastward, making no stand for their royal stronghold, and were pursued with fearful slaughter to Glenrige or Newry (*c.* 329 A.D.). The broad lands from lough Sheelin to the Foyle won by the Connachta warriors became the new province of Airgíalla. The glory of Emain Macha was henceforth but a memory—its great hall nearly two hundred feet square, its famous Red-branched house Cráebrúad, the huge entrenchments of its hosts laid for ever desolate.

From this vast ruin, according to one legend, the last remnant of the old warriors fled eastward to Dún dá Lethglas (now Downpatrick)—a hill overlooking the famous Ráith Celtchair by the Quoile as it winds its way to Loch Cúan: to the south they held over the bay of Dundrum the fortress of Dún Rudraige on one of the three famous sounding waves of Ireland. In fact, however, the dominance of the Celtic dynasties was practically destroyed on the eastern sea-board. The region is sometimes called by the chroniclers, in memory of the old

realm, "the Fifth" or "Conchobor's Fifth"; but the genealogies indicate that the whole district lay from that time in the hands of the older races. It was broken into four kingdoms, no one of which ever secured permanent authority over the others. The Ulaid, though they kept the name of the former dominant Celtic people, were mainly descendants of the ancient races. On the seaboard of what is now Antrim was an Érainn kingdom, Dál Ríata. The Picts held the inland region of Dál nAraide along Loch Neagh and on both sides of the Bann valley to the sea, with their western border probably along the watershed separating the basin of the Bann from that of Loch Foyle. Conaille, stretching south over the Cú Chulainn lands to Ardee, was also ruled by the Picts, who had thus on the fall of Emain Macha secured power from Loch Neagh to Dundalk Bay.*

The dismembering of the western side of the old Fifth was completed by the grandson of Muiredach Tírech, Niall of the Nine Hostages, king of Tara about 400 A.D. (18). His three sons—Éogan, Conall, and Énna—occupied what was left in the north-west, called after them Tír Eógain, Tír Conaill, and Tír Énda. "Éogan's Land" or the peninsula of Inishowen, was held by the mighty fortress of Ailech of far older time, and still among the chief wonders of Ireland, with its central enclosure seventy-seven feet in diameter, surrounded by a wall of uncemented stones with hidden galleries and passages to secret entrances; while the whole hill was encompassed by circles of ramparts with wide spaces between for encampment. From this noble stronghold, commanding the two great waterways, Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly, ruled the "kings of Ailech," or "kings of the Fochla," an old Irish word for the north. Tír Conaill, covering the modern Donegal, and perhaps stretching down to Sligo, fell to Conall. To his east lay the smaller territory left to the third brother, Énna. Niall's brother Brión got possession of south-western

* *See* Map, p. 57.

Ulaid—the later Tír Briúin or Bréifne—and permanently added this territory to Connacht.

The rapidity and extent of the Connachta conquests in the north will not appear surprising when it is found possible to produce Irish maps to illustrate the condition of the country. In the breadth of the land of the Ulaid the main roads all ran north and south—not one highway from east to west. The fate of "Ulster" was from first to last determined by the physical difficulties of its mountain masses, the great waters of Loch Neagh, and surrounding marshes and forests and bogs painfully traversed by such passes as those of Kilwarlin below Moira and of Killultagh.

Thus as the northern Fifth of the Laigin had fallen, so ended the Fifth of the Ulaid. The Dál Cuinn had rounded off their circuit of conquest, from Crúachu to Uisnech and to Tara, thence to Emain Macha, to Ailech, to the Dún Rock, and across Loch Erne and Loch Allen back to the Shannon. Their princes and septs were scattered from the eastern to the western sea, and from Carbury in Kildare to Inishowen, so that the dynasty and its branches dominated all the northern half of Ireland except the lands beyond Ardee to the Giant's Causeway. After the time of Niall the Connacht power was regarded as comprising three chief divisions—the kingdom of Connacht, the Airgíalla, and the territory of the Uí Neill in Mide and Brega. The recalcitrant Laigin were laid under tribute to what was known by the ancient term *Teora Connachta*, "the Three Connachts," which claimed an equal share in the division of the tribute, with its admission of superior rights (19).

The history of southern Ireland in the early centuries is even more obscure than that of the northern provinces. Under the Pentarchy Mumu, as we have seen, was held by kings of the Érainn, with their capital on the Slieveragh hills, almost on the frontier of the old Fifth of the

south Laigin. Ancient tales speak of Eochu mac Luchta as king of Mumu, and of Cú Rúi as a great hero of that land. But in S. Patrick's time a new line of kings, the Eóganachta, ruled in a new capital, Cashel, a fort which lay outside the boundaries of the ancient Fifth. From certain Ogham inscriptions it seems probable that the Eóganachta represent a relatively late Gaulish settlement about Dungarvan and Ardmore on the southern seaboard. An old story tells that in the time of Corc, king of Mumu, Cashel was "discovered" (20) in a region wholly deserted and uninhabited, when swine-herds driving their flocks into the woods to feed were led to the site by "a most beautiful person" singing and prophesying; and that the king hearing of the miracle was moved to set up on the rock his place of assembly and seat of customs for rent and tribute. According to Córus Béscna, a seventh-century law-tract, Corc was a hostage at Tara when Patrick came there, so that the occupation of Cashel, in Gaelic *Caissel Cuirc*, or "Corc's castellum," could not be much earlier than 440: it is known as the only Latin name among the fortresses of Irish kings—the one place of note in ancient Ireland which does not bear a Gaelic name.

Great changes followed the advent to Cashel of the new rulers. At some unknown time kings of Mumu extended their power over Clare, formerly a part of Connacht, and even to the Aran islands where there is a territory that still preserves the name of Eóganacht. They annexed what are now the counties of Clare and Tipperary, a small part of Limerick, and the larger part of Waterford. King Oengus, Corc's grandson, in the third quarter of the fifth century made alliance with the Dési, strong fighting men driven from the Fifth of the north Laigin by Cormac two hundred years earlier to take refuge with the south Laigin. Oengus married the daughter of their chief, and by their aid conquered the south-eastern land on the sea as far as Waterford, and settled the Dési as frontier colonies on the new territory.

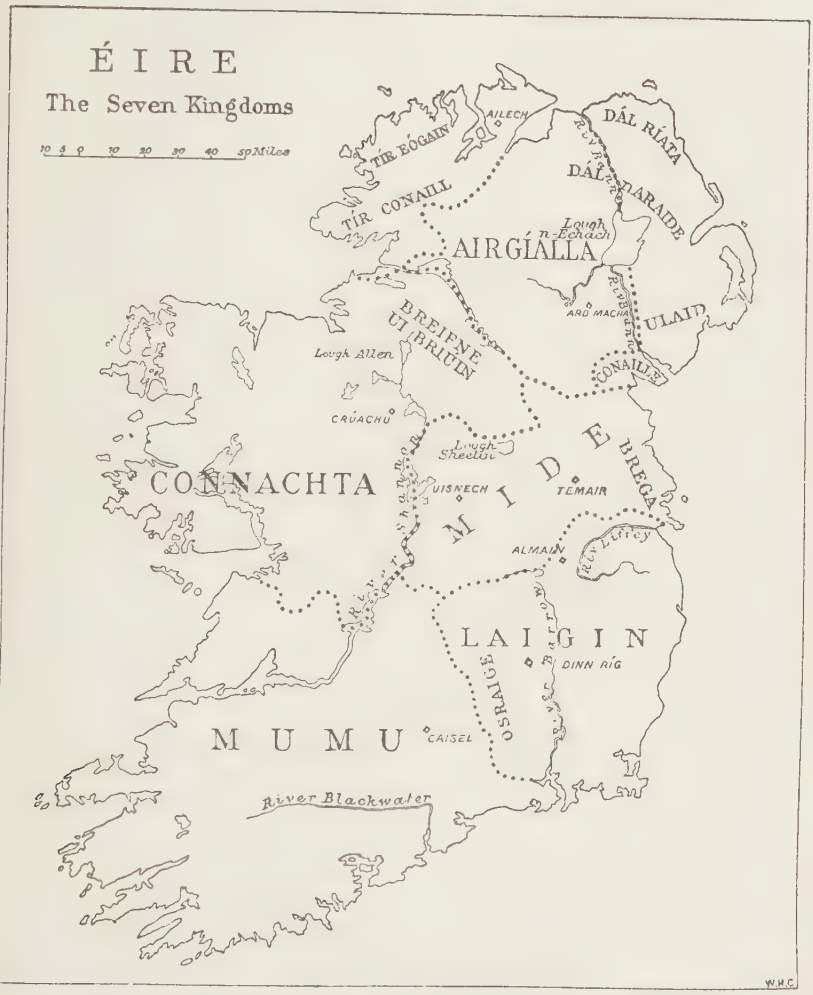
Such frontier colonies, also characteristic of the Dál Cuinn conquests in northern Ireland, may possibly represent another lesson learned by contact with Roman militarism. Mumu, thus enlarged almost to its present bounds, was divided into zones of Eóganachta kings: whether ruling at Cashel; at Temair Érann; in Desmond or south Mumu from Cork to Mizen Head, at Raithlenn; and in the western peninsulas at Loch Léin (Killarney). Scattered through these Celtic-ruled states were nine tributary kingdoms—the whole of the states finally tributary to Cashel.

It would seem that the kings of Cashel were content to establish their authority within these limits, seeking no further conquests, and satisfied with the tributes of wealthy territories, which are given in the old "Book of Rights" as far exceeding those to which any other of the six principal kings in Ireland laid claim. They became even more powerful than the kings of Dál Cuinn, ruling over a more firmly consolidated realm. According to Dr. MacNeill, the southern province until the Norse invasion appears to have enjoyed greater tranquillity than any other realm in western Europe.

It was confronted, indeed, by a permanent peril. Kings of Tara had cut off from the north Laigin the plain of Brega and rich lands of the Boyne. In the later part of the fifth century Cashel kings crossed the borders of the south Laigin and absorbed the rich territory about the Suir. What remained of the two Laigin Fifths was united in one kingdom under the old kings of the southern territory: and between the two capital centres of the ancient Fifths—Tara and Dinn Ríg—a new royal fort was set up at Ailenn on the southern side of the Curragh of Kildare, in the border-land marked by the parting of the rivers north and south: hence kings of the Laigin were given in bardic poems the title of kings of Cuirrech (21).

Thus the transformation of Ireland begun by Tuathal the Possessor about 150 A.D. was completed in the time

of Loeguire son of Niall of the Nine Hostages. A new central monarchy had come into being in the midlands;



the Fifth of the Ulaid was broken up into distinct realms; the Laigin had contracted from two great kingdoms into one; and Mumu had been enlarged to about twice its old extent. From this time seven chief kingdoms were

established, each of them containing a number of minor kings :

(1) The kingdom of Crúachu or Connacht, now including Tír Briúin.

(2) The kingdom of Airgíalla, first annexed by aid from Connacht and closely connected with it.

(3) The kingdom of the northern Uí Neill—sometimes called also the kingdom of Ailech, or of In Fochla—attached to the kings of Tara.

(4) The kingdom of the Ulaid or the lesser Ulster, independent of both Connacht and Tara, and internally divided into separate states.

(5) The kingdom of Tara, or of the southern Uí Neill, in the midlands east of the Shannon.

(6) The kingdom of the Laigin from the Liffey southward, made by the union of the two diminished Fifths of the north and south Laigin.

(7) The kingdom of Cashel or Mumu—the ancient Fifth increased to twice its original size (22).

The two ascendant dynasties of North and South had in fact re-made the map of Ireland, and marked out divisions for its provinces which were to last with scarcely any change for six hundred years—a fact which could scarcely be paralleled in any other country in those centuries.

For about a century after the rearrangement of the boundaries, the Laigin kings made repeated efforts to recover possession of the midland plain from the Liffey to the Shannon. In one form or other the struggle in the border-land of north and south was perpetually renewed ; but except for this ancient dispute there were in Ireland no " wars " properly so-called until the Norse invasions. What the annalists call by the Latin name for war, *bellum*, is always a single battle, and the ancient Laws show plainly that decision of a dispute by battle was regarded purely as a method, the royal method, of decision by ordeal of combat. " It is not customary," says an old author, " to continue battle after a ruler has

fallen." The system explains why the *fiana* fell into desuetude. In the epic tradition, every petty king was commander of three thousand fighting men: in the earliest laws the troops of a petty king number only five hundred. The force led by Muirchertach of the Leathern Cloaks in his famous circuit of Ireland in 941, when he exacted hostages from all the provincial kings, numbered only one thousand. The disasters of the *bellum* were limited by the size of the armies. The frequency, moreover, of "wars" was held in some check by the fact that the leader had to win the free consent of his men to follow him in the fight, and had himself to die on the field unless he won the victory.

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(1) P. 37. "The Ancient Irish Epic Tale, Táin Bó Cualnge" (Ed. Dunn), pp. 2–4.
(2) P. 38. See O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," p. 491. See also O'Grady: "Silva Gadelica," II, 401–404, and Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 118.
(3) P. 38. Flann Mainistrech. For his poems see "Archivium Hibernicum," II, pp. 86, 89, 90.
(4) P. 39. O'Grady: "Silva Gadelica," II, 403. Stokes: *Revue Celtique*, xiii, 33.
(5) P. 39. See Osborn Bergin in *Studies*. March, 1919.
(6) P. 40. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 120–124; "Silva Gadelica," II, 97, 287–289, 229, 357, 366.
(7) P. 41. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 120–124; "Silva Gadelica," II, 359–368.
(8) P. 43. Stokes: *Revue Celtique*, xxv, p. 18 ff.
(9) P. 44. "Silva Gadelica," II, 289.
(10) P. 45. W. F. De Vismes Kane: "The Black Pig's Dyke: The Ancient Boundary Fortification of Uladh" (*R.I.A.* XXVII, c. 14).
(11) P. 46. "Eriu," Vol. IV, p. 208.
(12) P. 46. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 143–153.
(13) P. 49. "Silva Gadelica," II, 33.
(14) P. 49. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 82, 150, 157; Kuno Meyer: "Fianaigecht" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVI); "Silva Gadelica," II, 292; O'Curry: "MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History," pp. 299–319.
(15) P. 50. "Transactions of the Ossianic Society," Vol. IV, p. 5.

(16) P. 50. Kuno Meyer: "Instructions of King Cormac" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XV, p. 9).

(17) P. 51. "Annals of the Four Masters," Vol. I, p. 124, note; MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 124; Keating: "History of Ireland" (Ed. O'Connor), pp. 301–303.

(18) P. 53. MacNeill: "Clare Island Survey 3" (*R.I.A.* XXXI). Niall's brother Brión, ancestor of the ruling class in Connacht—the Uí Briúin. They were of the kindred of Dál Cuinn or Connachta, the dominant *gens* from whom Connacht took its name. They settled on "the plain of Connacht," and set up the seat of their ancient kings at Raith Crúachan. Their race continually expanded from the fourth century to the fourteenth, when Clann Aodha Buidhe established themselves east of the Bann.

(19) P. 54. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 130.

(20) P. 55. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 127; Keating: "History of Ireland" (Ed. Dinneer), I, 123, 125.

(21) P. 56. "Annals of Ulster," p. 304, n. 3.

(22) P. 58. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 186.

CHAPTER IV

HIGH-KINGSHIP AT TARA

In spite of their conquests the position of the ruling family remained one of great difficulty. The northern Uí Neill were remote from the centre of authority in Ireland. The southern Uí Neill ruled a land whose boundaries were long disputed. The Laigin, holding roads and passes between Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga, shut in between ambitious enemies, were in perpetual war with the lords of Tara and of Cashel. Year after year they invaded the lost land beyond the Liffey and the Barrow, and pushed their battles far. They refused to submit to a tribute for which there is no parallel elsewhere in Ireland. Various traditions remain of the origin of the *bóroma* or "kine-counting": the exaction was reckoned at a hundred and fifty cows and hogs; the same of cloth coverlets for beds, and of cauldrons; a like number of men and women in servitude, and of maids, among them their king's daughter. It was probably exacted as a sign of submission at the coming of each new high-king, and of each new king of the Laigin: and as the levying of the tribute at least once in his reign became the test of the monarch's authority, so resistance to it was the sign of Laigin independence. An invasion of the province for the kine-counting is almost a regular item in the annals under the first or second year of the high-king; and never was it paid without fighting. As we have seen, the war of the Laigin was no sharp and brief effort. Their prolonged struggle to maintain independence was the most determined contest in Ireland until the Norse wars three centuries later.

Confronted by these difficulties, added to raids and wars beyond the sea, the Tara kings—probably Niall of the Nine Hostages himself—instituted a method of government for confirming the royal power, controlling more completely the pre-Gaelic peoples, and defending the new boundaries. He seems to have devised the system of planting within his territories lords of the conquering house as outposts of authority and defence. There is no instance until the O'Conor high-kings of the twelfth century of any king imposing dynasties outside his own province. The high-kings sometimes interfered in the choice of a king for the Laigin or for Mumu, but did not venture to intrude a king of their own stock. Princes of the conquering Connachta indeed had already been set up by the mere power of the sword, not only in the north-west, but in Airgíalla, which was treated entirely as a land of conquest where none of the earlier chiefs were allowed to survive, and whose territory was completely settled under rulers of the new dynasty. It was different in the midlands, however, where from old time chiefs of the Laigin stock had continued to rule, while paying tribute to the kings of Uisnech or Tara: the memory of one of these petty states is preserved in modern Meath—the Fir Tulach, or "Men of the Mounds," who continued to hold what is now Fartullagh under their own chiefs.

When Niall established a lord of his own house in a tributary state the older chief was not of necessity dispossessed, but depressed in power and position he was bowed under obedience to the superimposed lord of the conquering race. The diplomatic "planting" of new lords was carried out in frontier posts, and especially in newly conquered territories of the resentful Laigin, where there was a larger proportion of states thus appropriated than in any leading Gaelic kingdom except Airgíalla (1). They held territories scattered through the modern counties of Meath, Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, and Kildare; lands which were not

continuous, being merely appropriated portions of the kingdom of Tara. Niall's brothers and his sons—the eight sons out of fourteen who left families or septs—all had their posts in the new scheme. Connacht was thickly planted with princes of the royal family. One of Niall's brothers held Tír Briúin; a second was placed on "Ailill's land," now represented by Tirerril in north Sligo; a third, Fiachra, was settled on Sligo Bay, and a branch of his sept on Galway Bay; others had territories near Tuam and around Clew Bay. Niall's brother Maine, a prince of the Airgíalla branch, was set over the Picts in a territory called after him Uí Maine. Cairbre was richly endowed, or his sept later, with a patrimony in the north-eastern corner of Connacht, which still retains his name in the barony of Carbury in Co. Sligo; there was another Carbury of the kingly house in the borderland of Granard with its barren mountains and rude hill-dwellers, later supposed for their wildness to be under the curse of Patrick. Niall's son Loeguire, afterwards king of Tara, or his near descendants, obtained a territory on the Connacht side of Loch Erne. It must be noted that the sept of Loeguire and Cairbre in Connacht became afterwards subject to rulers of the Connachta. In the midlands they remained under the Tara dynasty—one son in Mide, another in Brega, others, Maine and Fiacha and a grandson Ardgal, in other lordships. A Cairbre was established in a third Carbury south of the Boyne whose chief was guardian of the Laigin border in Kildare.

The same system was carried out by other leading dynasties. About this time territories were granted to septs belonging to the ruling class of the Laigin. In Mumu the system of appropriation was adopted by the Eóganacht line. Cashel was surrounded by a zone of tributary states whose rulers were not of Eóganacht lineage; but westward of these a belt of Eóganacht influence extended across the province from the Shannon to the southern coast. An Eóganacht sub-dynasty was

established at Loch Léin (Killarney), another to the west of Cork. The newly conquered land to the south-east by the Suir was given in keeping to the Dési, whom Oengus in the later fifth century had taken into his service to carry out the conquest of the lands about the Suir, and made his allies by marrying their chief's daughter.

Instances of imposing a new lord on a territory are found in every part of Ireland, and in every age from the fifth to the sixteenth century. The habitual creation of mean lords can alone explain how without violence numerous branches of the dynastic septs, and especially of the more powerful kings, became permanently, and in every district, the superior nobility over the country. No doubt the authority of leading kings was tempered by prudence. *Céli* or clients attached by their free will to a lord, and occupying their hereditary farms could not be handed over to a new lord without their consent. Since Irish law did not allow them to be evicted, this consent was necessary for a peaceful transfer. Grants of lordship made by a king were evidently not effected by any form of expropriation or accompanied by violence, since they took place so tacitly and insensibly that they are never chronicled. Exceptions are the planting in much later times of an O'Brien dynasty in Tulach Óg, and of an O'Conor dynasty in Dublin and in Meath—all of which failed owing to local revolts. When a king of the Old Irish period devolved his lordship over a part of his territory to one of his kinsmen, he probably asked for no grave increase of burdens or dues. Tribute was apparently first established when rulers of the old races were allowed by the Celts to remain on condition of paying certain dues; if the subjected chiefs were overthrown by princes of the superior dynasty, these could then raise no claim for tribute. This would explain why the process of supplanting the local dynasties was not carried beyond certain limits—every case diminished the revenue of

the chief dynasty. The patrimonies of princes and lords in kinship to the dynasty were free of tribute to the over-king, as we learn from the *Book of Rights* and the old genealogies, where petty kingdoms of the Connachta and the north Laigin living under chiefs of another lineage from the superior kings are recorded as paying tribute, while none was exacted from those whose direct lords were descendants of Niall and his brothers. The territory granted to a prince of the royal house free of tribute was thus advanced in dignity; and it may well be that the advance led to a more rapid fusion of its peoples, equal in privileges of free citizenship. On the other hand, the dynasty gained an increased security. When the family of Niall were scattered over the country from Inishowen to the border of Kildare, a claimant to the kingship was sure of a powerful backing of kinsmen. His authority was widely supported and extended. Gradually the over-king took powers to send on occasions a viceroy to represent his authority. In times of trouble, driven from his own territory, his right was recognized to enter a sub-kingdom and replace there the under-king.

"Fighting Niall" left a vivid memory: famous was "noble Niall's shout"; "as yellow as primrose was his hair"; or in the romantic tale of Cúan ua Lothcáin "white as fair wood-shavings. . . . Blue as deep as a sprig of woad the great slow-moving eye of Erin's prince. . . . Fresh as grass above the Brugh was Niall's shining mantle." (2). His fiercest enemies were the warrior kings of the south Laigin, descended from Cathaír Mór in the third century, and noted for their battles in all early story. In Niall's time or thereabouts Dúnlaing, and Énna Cennselach, great-grandson of Fiachu Baicced, ruling in Ailenn (Knockaulin, on the upper Liffey), had great renown in war. "Though many did Crimthann (his son) give of battles about roads, much more did Énna give of battles against warriors." He was reputed one of the most powerful and formidable fighters of

that time. It was told that his son Eochu encamped for nine days and nights on Tara (3) to establish his right to the monarchy, till a learned druid reproached him for violating the *geasa* of Tara, so that he quitted the Hill and relinquished the sovereignty. On his way from "the house of Niall" south to his own land he was refused hospitality by Niall's chief poet Laidcenn. In revenge he led a raid which destroyed the poet's stronghold and killed his only son. The high-king brought his hosting to exact legally from the Laigin that Eochu should be "given him as pledge and hostage. And this had needs to be done." On the bank of the Slaney he was left before Niall, with a chain around his neck and the end of the chain through the hole of a stone pillar. Nine champions advance towards him to slay him. "Woe!" said Eochu, "this is bad indeed!" With that he gave himself a twist, so that the chain broke in two. He plied the bolt upon them so that the nine fell. . . . Thereupon Niall came south once more. "A guarantee shall be given from the Laigin," said Laidcenn, "and let Eochu come that we may see each other for so long as a cow is being milked." "Let it be done," said Eochu. Then his arms were taken away from him, and Laidcenn set about his malison that Eochu should melt away before him. But even while he was at his malison the lad made a cast with a stone which struck him in the skull (4).

Niall ravaged the Laigin, decreeing exile against Eochu so long as he himself should live. While Eochu fled to Alba, Niall himself went to Rome of Latium to seek the kingship (of the world). And that was the time he held the Nine Hostages, namely those of the Five traditional "Fifths" of the Irish, and four peoples of Alba—Picts, Saxons, Britons, and Franks; for in early Irish usage Alba meant Albion, or all Britain ("Dear to me," said Deirdre, "is that eastern land Alba with its wonders"). So the old story ran. Niall in fact carried on raids across the Irish sea, joining the

Picts and emigrant Scots from Ireland to devastate the border to the Roman Wall. "The barbarians," lamented the Britons, "drive us back to the sea, the sea beats us again upon the barbarians; so that between these two enemies we have two sorts of death before us, we are either butchered or drowned." South of the Wall he pushed his wars into Britain itself, and even into Gaul. The troubles of his ceaseless fighting at home and abroad strangely meet in the tradition of his death off the Isle of Wight. "It was this Eochu," is the story given in the genealogies, "who slew Niall king of Ireland and Britain, slaying him with one cast upon the Iccian Sea."

The kingship of Tara passed to Nath Í, son of Niall's brother Fiachra who held land in Connacht. Of Nath Í we know nothing but that he was fourth of the kings of Uisnech and Tara who fought in continental wars at the fall of the Roman Empire. He died somewhere on the continent, perhaps in Gaul where he had led an expedition in 429—killed according to old tradition by a flash of lightning in the Alps—and his body, carried back to Ireland by his son, was buried with the Connacht kings in "Crúachu of the sadness," where the red pillar stone over his grave still stands in that strange and solemn cemetery. The last two kings of Ireland had died fighting abroad, Niall in the English Channel, Nath Í on the Continent. With these ended the foreign wars of the Irish kings.

Loeguire, son of Niall, was according to custom transferred or advanced from Connacht to the kingship of Tara (5); and Ailill Molt, son of Nath Í, ruled in his place at Crúachu. The dominant passion of Loeguire was his sworn vengeance on the Laigin for Niall's death by a Cennselach arrow. "The son of Dúnlaing" was his enemy, and the son of Énna. A great victory in 454 was celebrated by the summoning in 455 of the Feis of Tara, where at every new reign the chiefs and kings of Ireland were called to the high-king's court. But in 459 Loeguire's army was utterly broken at Athdara

on the Barrow, where the heads of the slaughtered forces of Leth Cuinn were heaped by the ford under a burial cairn of stones. Loeguire himself was taken prisoner by the warrior son of Énna, Crimthann, "famous king," of "bristling mansions" (443–483). He won his release by an oath on the Sun and Wind that never again during his life would he demand the hated *bóroma*. In little more than two years he again raided the plain between the upper valleys of the Liffey and the Boyne to lift a prey of cows (463). But there he "died an ill death," when the Elements wreaked their vengeance upon him, and the Earth swallowed him. "May be," says the chronicler, "it was his guarantees to the Laigin, the Sun and Wind, that killed him" (6). The body of the passionate warrior was carried to Tara where, loyal to the last to his father, he was buried in pagan fashion on the southern rampart, standing unconquered with his weapons on him, face to face with his enemies the Laigin, waiting the day which the druids called *erdathe*, the judgment of the gods. After him came his cousin Ailill Molt, son of Nath Í—the last king from Connacht to celebrate at Tara the Feis that proclaimed his sovereignty. In his turn he took up the Laigin war, now defeated, now victorious; but not by them, but by the forces of his own household he was slain in the battle of Ocha, 483 A.D.

The battle of Ocha (483) was singled out by the earliest Irish chronicler whose name we know, Cúana (*c.* 609), as marking one of the leading epochs in old Irish history. The reign of Conchobor mac Nessa in the northern Fifth; the reign of Cormac at Tara; and the battle of Ocha; so he reckoned the three great stages of the story—the glory of the Five equal kings as told in the Ulster sagas; the creation of the central monarchy at Tara; and the settlement, so ominous to Ireland, of the peculiar system by which that monarchy was held in alternate succession among leading branches of the Uí Neill north and south. In every Irish state the

succession of kings followed a definite and complicated law of inheritance. Under this law a great-grandfather, his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons—four generations—constituted a *derbfine*, or true family. If a man died all the living members of the derbfine to which he belonged became his heirs, and his property was divided among them in proportions fixed by law. When the fifth generation came forward the *derbfine* subdivided itself into a new set of similar groups, the head of each being a son of the man who was head of the older group, on whose death the group of the old *derbfine* was closed. The hand was the symbol of the *derbfine*, the palm representing the common ancestor and the joints of the fingers the three generations of his descendants. The "nail in front of the fingers" was the proverbial phrase for the last of the inheritors.

At the death of a king his property legally passed to the members of his *derbfine;* but as kingship was not divisible like land or stock, the new ruler was chosen by election from the true family—sons, brothĕrs, or uncles, and their descendants—the possible heirs in due line of succession being alike known as *rígdomna*, "king-material," or in homely phrase "the makings of a king." A general assembly of freemen was called to elect the new king, when it seems that the chief nobles held a conference apart and announced their choice, which was usually accepted by the general body. The many instances of joint kings in the annals probably arose from compromise of rival claims.

It followed from this system that in many kingdoms there were two or more dynastic lines; and that in each of these lines it was essential that not more than two generations should elapse without a member of the *derbfine* obtaining the kingship. In the third or fourth generation if no young lord succeeded in winning the kingdom his line fell out of legal inheritance. And with his failure sank the fortunes of his family. Where the *derbfine* ceased to share in the kingship and its advantages,

it declined in influence and wealth—as the old proverb ran: "Five generations from king to spade." For years before the election each of the *rígdomna* knew that success depended on the strength of his faction and on his proved fitness to reign by superior command in war. "Not of equal length are the tops of the fingers, not equal in strength are all men" (7), was the saying. Even with the simple custom of primogeniture every country in Europe down to our own time has been ravaged by wars of succession. But under the Irish law there was every incitement to conflict, both before and after the king's death. "The first adventure of a young lord" was the proverbial phrase for the raid that was to prove his valour. As carrying off spoils was the recognized way of provoking battle a *rígdomna* at the head of his followers challenged a neighbouring territory by sweeping the country of its cattle. By skilful strategy he might triumphantly bring home his company and his prey; if forced to battle by the "rising out" of the plundered land he must conquer or die, for a leader beaten in such a foray seldom left the field alive. Thus if kings or nobles were not resolute in maintaining peace the country was in danger of perpetual strife, not between rulers of hostile kingdoms, but between family factions within the states themselves. More especially such local conflicts developed within the larger groups of states with an over-king at their head; for here warring lords naturally sought whatever help they could find from neighbouring chiefs, and the borders of dispute were broadened. Irish history however shows that in ordinary conditions the perils were not formidable; while the Annals abundantly prove that whatever dangers lay in the system itself, they were only fully revealed under the pressure of foreign invasion, Norse or Anglo-Norman.

The battle of Ocha, a "war" begun to secure a *rígdomna* from falling out of the line of succession, was

in fact a decisive event in the high-kingship of Ireland. Muirchertach mac Erca of the northern Uí Neill, king of Ailech, did not belong to the same *derbfine* as the reigning monarch Ailill Molt of the Connachta. He was *rígdomna* by inheritance from his great-grandfather Niall, but neither his father nor his grandfather had held the high-kingship, and if he himself failed to secure it all legal claim of northern Uí Neill must end. The most daring and active warrior of his time, Muirchertach determined before it was too late to secure the succession against the Connachta. He made alliance with one of his own *derbfine*, Luguid, son of Loeguire and grandson of Niall, leader of the southern Uí Neill, and other chiefs—even according to one account of Crimthann of the Laigin, before whom Loeguire had fallen. They threw their joint forces together, with Crimthann foremost, in the battle at Ocha near the great fort of Tara, where Ailill Molt " the high, terrible " was vanquished and slain (8).

From the day when Ailill Molt fell the primacy among Irish rulers passed to the immediate " family " of Niall, and after him no king of the Connachta ruled at Tara for six hundred years. Lawful succession to the high-kingship was secured to the direct posterity of Niall of the Nine Hostages, whose descendants now united to form a separate and independent dynasty. On the other hand the line of Niall was excluded from the Connachta kingship, which had been held by Niall himself and by his son Loeguire before they became kings of Tara. Henceforth there was no longer a joint dynasty. The Uí Neill indeed, having secured sole succession at Tara, sought to cover in oblivion all connection with the house of the Connachta now falling to the rank of under-kings; and gradually disguised their descent by dropping out of their genealogies the word Connachta, and using in its place the term Dál Cuinn (really a synonym) to describe the ancestors of their race.

A bargain had probably been made between the victors at Ocha that Luguid of the southern branch of Uí Neill should first reign and after him Muirchertach. Luguid (483–511) carried on the secular war with the Laigin. He too died, it was said, like his father by divine vengeance for his impious unbelief. Looking on a church at Achad Farcha near Tara, he exclaimed, "Is not this the church of that cleric who by an evil spell of prophecy proclaimed that from my father's seed should come no king or prince?" And straightway by a bolt from heaven he fell dead in the "Field of Lightning" and Muirchertach reigned as high-king.

The famous champion Muirchertach mac Erca, first of the northern Uí Neill at Tara, was probably a heathen, as the name would show—dedicated to the goddess Erca (9). Ireland already knew the fame of his wars. "War-rock of mastery—full twenty battles and two he won without sorrow," with Picts and Laigin and Connachta, in the ravaging of the south from east Limerick to Cashel, and the slaying of Oengus, first Christian king of Cashel, with his warrior queen Eithne, the Dési princess, in the battle of Cenn Losnado (490). Early in his reign (511–534), at the battle of Druim Dergaide, he conquered the rich midland plain south of Uisnech and definitely pushed back the Laigin frontier. "By it the plain of Mide was lost and won," wrote a poet-historian in the next century. For centuries later, however, the pre-Celtic state of Fertullagh about Mullingar, tributary to Mide, was ruled by princes of the Laigin. Old traditions survive of Muirchertach's thirty years of kingship. On account of his stormy life he was said to have had for his paramour Sín (tempest) who at last set fire to his house. He was drowned in wine, and also burned—perhaps an allegorical way of recording the unheroic fact that his banqueting house took fire in the midst of a carouse, and a storm made it impossible to quench the fire. Another tale attributes his end to the vengeance of a woman of the ancient race about

Tara for the slaughter of her family by Muirchertach at the battle of Áth-sige on the Boyne. There by the river she set fire to his house of Cleitech, so that he, casting himself from the flames into a vat of wine, "was killed and drowned and burned together" on that night of Samain, while the woman sang of her triumph: "I am Taetan, the woman who killed the chief of Niall" (10).

REFERENCES, CHAPTER IV

(1) P. 65. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 176–182.
(2) P. 65. "Otia Merseiana," II, 90, 91. *Eriu*, IV, pp. 93–94 (Poem by Cúan ua Lothcáin, A.D. 1024).
(3) P. 66. See "Silva Gadelica," II, 376, 408. Keating, "History of Ireland" (ed. Dinneen), II, 405.
(4) P. 66. Meyer, "Otia Merseiana," II, 89, 90. Meyer notes at Laidcenn's speech that the text seems corrupt.
(5) P. 67. An unpublished tract in the Book of Lecan, also found in the introductory part of the Book of Genealogies by MacFirbis, gives the succession to the Monarchy at this time: on the death of the *ardrí* the king of Connacht took his place and a new king was elected in Connacht. The high-kingship was filled from Connacht from the time of Niall till the death of Ailill Molt about 438 A.D. See MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 130.
(6) P. 68. "Annals of the Four Masters," p. 144, note, p. 145. See also "Silva Gadelica," II, 407.
(7) P. 70. From a poem of O'Daly, 1213 A.D., which shows the persistence of Irish tradition.
(8) P. 71. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 190, 231.
(9) P. 72. See the poems by Flann Mainistrech in "Archivum Hibernicum," II, pp. 50, 64, 75–76.
(10) P. 73. "Annals of the Four Masters," pp. 173, 175. "Annals of Clonmacnois," 529. Stokes: *Revue Celtigue*, xxiii, 395 ff.

CHAPTER V

THE IRISH STATE

It is evident that during the centuries of "Celtic" invasion a very elaborate system of kingship had been established, flexible in form and capable of ingenious and wide development. What we know of it must be gathered from traditions accepted by a people familiar with the customs of their time; and more especially confirmed by the earliest written law-tracts, whose sacred authority was wholly based on the firm foundation of unquestioned oral tradition on which they rested (1).

The early *tuatha* or kingdoms of the Celtic-speaking invaders were measured not by extent of ground, but by the numbers of the population necessary for independence and security. Each of the old settlements was in theory supposed to maintain a levy of thirty hundreds of armed men enlisted from the age of seventeen—the *tricha cét*. But before the time of history-writing many changes had happened. The scale of armed forces had been altered; there had been new groupings of kingdoms, sometimes dividing, sometimes continuing and adding to ancient states; till gradually the *tuatha* came to mean divisions very variable in extent. During centuries of invasion and conquest these *tuatha* had gradually taken rank in different degrees of independence. Three main grades may be distinguished: (i) when the invaders had come in strength and secured the leadership of a district they established "free states"—that is, kingdoms where men owed neither obedience nor tribute to any lord but their own ruler of the conquering race: these were the *soer-thuatha*. (ii) A second

order of states was formed—the *for-tuatha*—where the ancient chief still ruled in his own territory, while he was subject to tribute to the conquering over-king of the district. (iii) There were other communities, the *aithech-thuatha*, groups which in the historical period were hardly political bodies, and probably had no corporate existence except such as tradition gave them : they were known to contemporaries as remnants of an older order, but not as legal or political corporations (2).

Dr. MacNeill in a broad illustration of the degrees of freedom suggests that the non-tributary states may be comparable to the existing autonomous dominions of the British Empire ; while the tributary peoples could be likened to native states such as may be found in British India, possessing self-government but subject to what is called Imperial contribution. If communities of ancient origin were at least in theory " unfree," they were in no sense slaves. The " servile " states living under their traditional customs had the right to carry arms, and some of the stoutest fighters were of the " rent-paying " peoples. That their position was not contemptible or degraded we know by such mentions as the " stock ever-honoured " (3) of the ancient races, whose bones lay under the burial mounds round which were gathered in reverence the great assemblies of the people in later times.

The theory of " tribes " holding land " in common " had no place in old Irish life. If traditions of common holding lingered in Ireland from a prehistoric world, the very memory of these primitive communities was dying away in the fourth century. No trace of any such system remains under the earliest Irish kings known to us ; nor in the most ancient laws, which represent a land where every fruitful field and wood was appropriated, and nothing was left undivided but " the common mountain " or unenclosed highlands above the habitable land, and the still unreclaimed marsh and forest. The invaders were but a small fraction of the people, and could in no

sense form a "tribal community." The Cenél nEógain, descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, gave their name to Tír Eógain (Tyrone); in the same way a territory in Wexford was called after Énna Cennselach and his posterity. But we know of no case in which fighting bands crossing a tempestuous sea displaced the great body of native inhabitants in any district to form a "tribal community," a system indeed of which they themselves had no model. The countryside after they had settled down on it was much as it has been ever since, occupied by men of many races, classes, ranks, traditional beliefs, and occupations—a people whom it would be no more easy to force into a "tribal community" than it would be to-day. The only technical use of *cland* in the Old Irish laws is that of "children." Outside the laws it has wider meanings, as when S. Paul calls the Israelites his own *cland* (4).

In the slow overrunning of the island by warrior bands, each under their own chief, the sense of local independence was strong. Over a hundred small kingdoms or *tuatha* were set up, communities sufficient to provide for their own defence and effective government. They might fairly be compared with the hundred and fifty districts in which courts of quarter sessions are now held for the larger population of modern Ireland. "Most of the modern 'baronies' so called take the place of ancient kingdoms" (5), and the memory of old boundaries survived through centuries of numerous changes of ownership in chief; in the nineteenth century Irish peasants of the west could still trace borders obliterated by ages of wars and confiscations of incoming strangers.

In the earliest tradition only one order of king was known—the *rí* or king of a single *tuath*, in supreme authority and owing no allegiance to any higher lord. The *tuath* was no subordinate or provincial community. It had all the needful establishment for the complete life of a true kingdom—its king (in Christian times its bishop, apart from monastic bishops who had no diocesan juris-

diction), its ordered ranks of nobles and "men of worth," and freemen under *féni* law; it had its assemblies and law-courts with their trained lawyers, its fairs, its hostings of warriors, its scribes, poets, crafts of every kind. When higher orders of kings had been recognized, the *rí* of the *tuath* was still known as "the king of peaks who has the seven grades of the *féni* and their sub-classes in clientship, for these are the peaks of rule" (6). Seven *cumals* (7) were his honour-price, and twelve men his retinue when he went in state to an assembly.

There was a stout sense of popular independence in the little kingdoms, handed down by legal tradition and preserved in the law-tract of the seventh century *Crith Gablach:* "Which is higher in dignity, king or *tuath?* The king is higher. What dignifies him (above the *tuath*)? Because it is the *tuath* that raises the king to honour, not the king that raises the *tuath*." In ordinary times, indeed, the king was far from being an autocrat. The office of ruler was conferred on him by the assembly of freemen, and could be recalled by the assembly and given to another. He could only act by consent and aid of the assembly—in the *airecht*, when he summoned to his house the nobles and vassals and leading officials of the *tuath* who formed his court—in the *oenach*, or periodic gatherings of the body of freemen at some place of hallowed memory, such as the burial mound of a great hero where in Irish fashion "his pillar stone was raised above his tomb, his name engraved in Ogham, his funeral games were held."

The king must be of the royal kindred or *fine*, a noble of worth, elected by a meeting of the *tuath* which should extend over three nights, and at which the royal kindred had a special voice. He was entitled to have his house fortified by a stockade of a hundred and forty feet on every side, seven feet the thickness of the earth-work, and twelve feet its depth; also a "rampart of vassalage," which seems to have been an outer earth-work twelve feet beyond the first, twelve feet high, twelve feet broad,

and with an outward slope of thirty feet. The size of his house is nowhere given. We only hear in later times that the "ruler of a staff," a king who had abdicated and gone on pilgrimage and carried afterwards a pilgrim's staff as his emblem, might have a house of thirty-seven feet, but without any stockade or defence, since he had ceased to be a man of war. As a *rí* must not go hungry the attendant who had "to make a king's food" must be of surpassing valour and strength, capable of piercing a man through his shield, of killing a stag at one stroke, and such-like feats. There were three fastings that did not aggrieve a king when he went as guest: if he sat at a cauldron that has leaked; if there was default, without malice, in providing a joint for him; or if he was refused hospitality, as in that case he could claim more than he lost by the offence—even his whole honour-price.

However, the king himself, head of the assembly, judge in the courts, leader in war, could sink to the rank of a vassal by four "stoopings"—stooping to the tools of a vassal, the haft of a mallet, an axe, or a spade; or stooping to be alone when it was not proper, and charges might be brought against him when there was none to attest for him. Especially in the month of sowing (perhaps when the fields were full of every sort of people) he must never go with less than a judge and two servitors. He sank also to the worth of a vassal if in fleeing from enemies he was wounded in the back; but if he had gone right through the hostile army a wound in the back counted as one in the front.

Every week must see his round of duties fulfilled according to a model scheme of work for each day, which was probably put forward less as a formal code than as an engaging list of duties to set before a virtuous prince. Sunday was set apart for hospitality, "for he is not a rightful ruler who does not provide ale for Sunday." Another maxim runs: "According to dignity he shall make merry his gathering of magnates." There was a day for external affairs in relation to neighbouring states

and treaty law. Another day was given to ordinary home litigation between members of his own *tuath*. The remaining part of a week that must have witnessed a good deal of business was given to outdoor sports and domestic life.

"The three farms" of a king were "road and wild and sea. A third to him of that which the sea casts up, and a ninth to him from the share of waifs of his client which he finds in the wild. To him irrecoverably whatever is found on a road except a waif's share to him who finds it, if the owner be not known."

In the law-courts the *rí* was in supreme authority, according to the old saying, "he is no king who has not hostages in fetters, to whom the tribute of a ruler is not given, to whom the dues of legislation are not paid." The man who resisted the authority of his court had "a broad bed," in other words was "on the run"; any region where he took refuge was liable over seven freeholds for harbouring him, the final responsibility being fixed on one of them by lot. The fines of an absconder from justice were charged first on his kindred, then on the lord from whom he had taken a loan of cattle, then on his bed, raiment, and food, and finally on the king. "Every headless one [without kin or lord] unto the king." In the same way, "Everything that is undecided is taken to the king" (8). Lands where heirs had failed, which had been confiscated, or where ownership was disputed, passed into the keeping of the king until they were regranted or the dispute settled. Since the *tuath* maintained the king, it was their right that the king in his turn should give them the full sick-maintenance due by him.

To the king was entrusted all making of treaties with rulers beyond the border. As head of foreign affairs he could make oath for his own *tuath*, and as their representative could go into joint adjudication, into joint evidence, with external kings, when neighbouring *tuatha* enacted in their assemblies compacts of mutual recognition (*cairdde*) under which a common jurisdiction was set

up between them. This protection across the border was one of the benefits which a king could secure for his leading nobles and farmers. There were questions of refugees entering their territory, of fugitives flying from it, of illegal exactions by invading war-bands, of trespass, of restitution—as, for example, in case of dry cattle coming over the border into waste land, where the equity of Irish law decided that milch cows were not to be counted because their milk repaid the trespass; while adjudication was only needed for waste land since the laws made full provisions for trespass on a good soil. In case of grave wrong the king might require a pledge from the *tuath* for a hosting within the border to keep guard on a hostile force beyond it; to watch over proof and right that he may have battle or treaty; or to cross the border against a king who refused to come to terms and evaded his just liabilities. If the defendant could not be reached the levy was made on the *tuath* responsible for him. Invasion of a neighbouring territory was a customary and legal form of levying a claim unjustly refused. But the zeal of a too warlike king was held in check, since (whether he could make the defendant pay or not) he himself was bound to repay what he exacted from others; nor could he of his own will exact from his *tuath* pledges for "over-spendings" or for special war service. When hostings were summoned for a matter which concerned several *tuatha* the decision must be made at a joint assembly of the confederated group, which the allied kings attended in state with their due retinue of clients. To ensure their presence the head of the confederation could exact as pledge something specially precious from each of the subordinate kings, each of whom had the right to decide the pledge to be given by his *tuath*, "provided it was a proper one." Treaties were confirmed by the giving of hostages as safeguards against revolt or refusal of the services promised by the contracting *tuatha*. The life of a hostage might be forfeited for any breach of agreement, but this reprisal, dangerous in

practice, seems to have been very rare. What really was more regarded by those who gave the hostage, a member of their own *derbfine*, was the fact that their failure to keep faith led to the forfeit of their kinsman's " honour " as well as of his personal liberty. So long as the treaty was observed the hostage, though in fact a prisoner, dined at the king's table, and shared the social life of the court. But if his lord's pledge was broken the hostage's " honour " was lost; he became an outlaw and might sink into a position of slavery; debts due to him need no longer be paid; he could be killed or insulted with impunity. On the other hand, the obligation of the confederated body of states to maintain the common law is illustrated in the provision that compensation for homicide should be paid not only to the king of the *tuath*, but also to the king of the province concerned, and in certain cases probably to the high-king—in fact, to all the authorities called in to levy the fine decreed by law, and to administer the property involved in the case. Kings of various degrees could also make grants of land, with consent of the occupiers, and subject to law in certain cases where alienation of land could be brought before the courts; but the superior king could claim also that while the chief of a *tuath* had power of granting lordships to his followers in the territory under his jurisdiction, he must as a subordinate ruler secure the consent of his overlord (9).

Through the system of treaties weaker states were drawn together into groups, and new orders of kings appeared. Only one grade of king is recognized in the introduction to the *Senchus Mór*. But in the seventh and eighth centuries kings of various degrees already long existing were formally classified in writing; the king of Ireland; the king of a Fifth; the king of a great *tuath* holding hegemony over a number of weaker states; the king of a *tuath*. The *ruiri* was established, superior lord over lesser kings (10). One of the early law-tracts records titles of rulers of higher position than the " king

of peaks"; the "king of troops," leader in time of war, in peace adviser of a group of *tuatha*—eight *cumals* his honour-price, and twenty-four his retinue in assembly: "the king of the stock of every head," this is the king of over-kings "to whom is given the correction of every head whom its lord does not constrain"—twice seven *cumals* his honour-price, "thirty his retinue in his *tuath*, seven hundred elsewhere for correction among others." The king of a "Great Fifth," such as Mumu or Connacht, held the lead over the lesser kingdoms. But while a king might be overlord of many *tuatha* he was true administrator only in his own particular territory. Each local king preserved his unquestioned rights in the administration and government of his own *tuath*. He decided disputes between his people, and took part in arbitration courts to settle any difficulties with the people of a neighbouring king. If the quarrel came to litigation with an adjoining *tuath*, an over-king or a king of the province had to judge between them. If the dispute was between subjects belonging to different provinces it was brought to the court of the high-king.

Kings of every rank were bound by Irish law (*fénechus*), the common custom of the *féni*: "It is the *tuath* that adopts it, it is the king who compacts it." But in special times other rules came forward—"it is the king who enforces them." These referred to periods of urgent calamity or difficulty, when it was necessary in the general interest to confirm special authority to the king by the pledge of the people. Such powers were allowed after a pestilence when all ordinary life was disorganized, or in time of dearth or famine when the raising of produce needed direction on lands where all the men lay dead. After the defeat of a group of states in battle his power must be so strengthened that the king "may unite his *tuatha* thereafter so that they may not destroy each other." Like pledges of support were demanded for expulsion of stranger-kindred or usurping intruders, perhaps in memory or tradition of an incursion of

foreigners. In Christian times the king too might have special power to enforce " a law of religion that kindles, such as the Law of Adamnan."

Since " all these are benefit to a *tuath*," it was proper for a king to bind his people by pledge or hostage. Disputes and war were alike subject to law. The king leading a hosting was held guiltless, and could not be sued for exaction and restitution, unless an unrightful invasion was proved. Nor could he be sued when an external king was with him in his *tuath* on an expedition which failed to reach the accused. Laws of war were clearly defined, and modern students have recognized that battle between conflicting states was in old times the legal equivalent to the modern duel or combat between individuals, conducted by fixed rules, and closed the instant the chief on either side was slain.

The growth of confederations among the lesser states, and of ordered ranks of kings, must have gone very far before Cormac and Niall established the high-king at Tara with final authority even over the ancient Fifths. There may possibly have been older shadowy high-kings now lost in darkness. No new principle was involved. The high-king, if he had more illustrious assemblies, larger hostings, a wider scene of executive duties than the subordinate rulers, was still limited by the legal rights of the king of any *tuath*. When as head of the executive he had enforced justice, his local authority ceased. If he claimed one important power, to grant lordships in every part of Ireland over all the territories of his subject kings, it was a power which had evidently to be used with prudent regard for public feeling.

The advent of the *ardrí* did not break or alter the old traditions of Irish government. Two forces continued to influence Irish life, the people's system of local government, and the centralizing power of the superior kings. If (as is commonly suggested) the Irish suffered from not having any " cities " after the manner of other lands, there was compensation in the fact that no citizen of a

tuath was far from a vital centre of government, of assemblies and discussions, of commemorations and fairs and festivals. Law was close enough to the people to win their understanding and loyalty, had traditional dignity to commend it to their respect, and was secured by the common will. The high-king remained the visible symbol of a fact recognized by the people and throughout all their literature, the unity of the nation.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER V.

(1) P. 74. See Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Law: The Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16).
(2) P. 75. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 275.
(3) P. 75. E. J. Gwynn: "The Metrical Dindsenchas," Part III, p. 3, line 12 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. X).
(4) P. 76. Stokes and Strachan: "Thesaurus Palæohibernicus," I, 526.
(5) P. 76. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 301.
(6) P. 77. Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Law: The Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16), p. 300. For the position and privileges of a king, see pp. 300–305.
(7) P. 77. A *cumal* (literally a bondwoman or female slave) was a measure of value equal to three cows. Eoin MacNeill, "Celtic Ireland," p. 103.
(8) P. 79. For the range of the king's duties see Eoin MacNeill: "Law of Status," etc., pp. 308–311.
(9) P. 81. According to Dr. MacNeill the king held a power of grant over the territory under his jurisdiction. A subordinate had also power of grant and, with the king's consent, of alienation. A superior king (*rí morthuaithe, rí cóicid, ruiri*), to whom a number of kings were subject, had a power of grant within all the territories of his subject kings. The king of Ireland had a power of grant in every part of Ireland. Kuno Meyer has published an interesting text "On the Distribution of *Cró* and *Díbad*" (*Eriu*, Vol. I, p. 209). *Cró* was compensation for homicide. *Díbad* was the property left by a man which was not distributed according to will but according to kinship. This text, which is in Old Irish, shows how *Cró* once levied was to be distributed, some to the king of the province, some to the king of the *tuath*, some to the force employed to levy it.
(10) P. 81. Eoin MacNeill: "Law of Status," etc., p. 300. The *rí-ríg*, or king of kings, was said to be entitled to a fine if the lesser kings failed to attend his regular assembly (*oenach*) or occasional convention (*dáil*). *Ibid.*, p. 312.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNION OF PEOPLES

The confederations of small states into a free Commonwealth was a genuine advance towards national life. There was another not less important—the union not only of states, but of the races old and new throughout the country to form one people.

The order of the old Irish society was intensely aristocratic, based as became conquerors on the authority of the lords of iron. They were ranked in the oldest Irish law by an ancient term—*nemeth* or sacred. The *nemith* were of that noble race or class whose ancient usage was the recorded law, and who could give legal testimony and make contracts in the court. The inferior peoples, the *non-nemith*, were the rest of the population. In the same way the name *féni*, once used to define a dominant race-element, became a term in the written laws for the aristocracy of landed freeholders. Brehon law was the "law of the *féni*"—that is, of the freemen, who if they were wealthy were ranked in the noble class according to the nobility of their descent or the extent of their possessions. The lower classes were those who had no share in the ancient tradition of *nemith* or *féni*—the old occupiers and tillers of the ground. Lowest of all were the *bothaig*, the *senchleithi*, and the *fuidir*. The *bothaig* seem to have been of the ancient stock of the country, who had a right of settlement or occupation of land, and served as hired labourers. The *senchleithi* were probably refugees of the old peoples, mercenaries and prisoners, men who had given military service and acquired some kind of settlement as tenants. The *soer-fuidir* were of free status originally, and after three

generations became attached to the community so that they could not legally leave the chief whose land they occupied: *doer-fuidir* were also outsiders, but in a lower rank and under harder terms of tenure. These three classes provided labour on the large holdings, toilers with no permanency of tenure, no free coming and going. The lord could prevent their leaving their land, but in the laws there is nothing about ejectment of tenants. Slaves—*mug*, a man slave, *cumal*, a woman slave—seem to have been numerous in heathen times, and to have diminished in early Christian days. The mention of kings owning one single slave shows how rare that traffic was before the Norse brought back the pagan trade. Captives in war were not reduced to slavery. A lord might ransom a criminal from the gallows or the dungeon, and make him a serf on his estate, not a slave (1). The limits of power in every class, and the relations of all the orders in the state from king to slave, were precisely defined by law.

By one of the many contrasts in that old Irish world, aristocratic privilege was tempered by some deep popular instinct which gradually forced the dividing lines between race and class, and opened broad highways for all to enter into the franchise of the *féni*. "A man is better than his birth" was the old Irish saying, and many gates were provided for men of every race by integrity and thrift to pass from a low to a high degree.

In the tradition of the *féni* there was a principle which in process of time overthrew barriers of race. This was the tradition of a "sacred" order not by birth or dominion, but by the mysteries of religion, philosophy, law, and the arts. Six things were specially revered in pagan lore; "three noble, sacred things—groves or temples, *filid* or poets, rulers"; and another three, "music, skilled craftsmanship, the cow." The last carries back the tradition to a great antiquity. Not only the making and judging of laws, but history, poetry, secular learning, and handicrafts, bore a solemn religious

meaning from the time when these arts were taught and practised in sacred groves. Here the old title of *nemeth* lingered long: near Armagh there was a chapel named *nemeth* where the pagan word of reverence survived into Christian times. Races old and new were intermingled in the religious mysteries. The representatives or descendants of the pre-Celtic druids carried on their ancient tradition of philosophy, and drew to them students from the new comers. If government was in the hands of the *féni*, and their ancient "custom" was the law, the interpretation of that law as a branch of learning, and the adapting of it to new needs, was largely the work of brehons or jurists, men in great part of the older races. The power of a sacred tradition, and an organized body under a common teaching and discipline, will be seen in the growth of a national law whose principles, confined by no local boundaries, were accepted throughout the whole country.

Scholars old or new entered equally into the freedom of the higher orders of the state. The term *ollam* was given to a man who had attained the highest position in his profession, whatever it might be, for there were many roads by which men of "servile communities" could enter into the higher orders of the state and take rank as *nemith*, though they formed no part of the governing classes. In the most ancient Irish society the names of skilled craftsmen were handed down with reverence—like that of Culann, artificer under Conchobor mac Nessa. Under old Irish law a leading artisan could by virtue of his craft become a freeman (2), and even if he ceased to practise his art retained for the rest of his life the legal rights of a *nemeth* to make contracts, give testimony, and so on. Thus it came that the word *soer* or free, as opposed to *doer*, when used as a name has two special meanings—a freeman and a craftsman (3). By ancient custom the amount of food or refection for each craftsman was settled by law in proportion to the rank of his art or trade, and he was paid one-tenth of the value

of the article he made. He had to give it his benediction as a solemn guarantee of good work before handing it to his employer, or to pay a fine from his hire equal to one-seventh part of his refection. The rank of a craftsman increased with his skill by which he could secure a higher "honour-price"; and the *ollam* could attain, according to the order of his trade, to a rank equal to the superior nobility or political class, the *soer-nemith*. For example, in one of the oldest law-tracts (4) the woodwright of an oaken house, the ship-builder, the builder of a mill, or a skilled carpenter in yew, ranked in the noble class or *flatha*. The chariot-maker, the shield-maker, the house-wright, the "cloth-figurer" (5) were equal to the middle-class agricultural orders of the *bóaire*. The harper was the only musician who could attain to noble rank. The mention from time to time of the diminutive size of a goldsmith; of a poet such as Dallán the "little blind man" who made the praise of Columcille after Druim-ceatt; of the most famous harpists of old time, Fer Fí, and Finn's "little Cnú, nut of my heart," shows how much the Celts owed to the older race. Beneath the seven professional grades, according to the law-tract *Miadlechta*, was the *bard*, "who has no law of learning but his own invention." Trumpeters, pipers, singers, along with horse-jockeys, charioteers, buffoons, etc., had neither franchise nor honour-price; their value was calculated according to the position of the lord who kept them. "Thou piper, thou hornblower, thou roaming musician," went the old saying, "thou who knowest the whole land, thou girdle without a knife, thou story-teller" (6). Turners, fetter-makers, leather-makers, combers, skilled fishermen of weirs, were classed with the *midbad* or poorer tillers of the ground. It was an evil curse—"May none spring from thee but shoe-makers and comb-makers, or people of that kind" (7). Weaving also of the rougher kind was a reproach; and the laborious cooking and candle-making of a great house.

Physicians and surgeons were held in honour. The usual title was a native word, *lieig*, from the Continental equivalent of which the Teutons are supposed to have borrowed the word that in English became "leech." The unlawful surgeon "without command or competence" who destroyed joint or sinew had to pay half the cost of injury and sick-maintenance, and one-fourth if he had "command and competence." The lawful surgeon "without command or competence" who destroyed joint or sinew was bound to pay a very heavy restitution: "with command and without competence," he had to pay three-fourths. After an operation a testing time was fixed by law—three years in the case of a cloven skull—during which the patient was under the surgeon's care and direction. According to an old triad there were "three things that constitute a physician: a complete cure, leaving no blemish behind, a painless examination" (8).

Opportunities to rise by skill and industry into higher social grades, even against the barriers of noble descent, were not lacking to the agriculturists. According to law "an unfree man in the position of a free man is he who purchases land or right of franchise by means of his art, or his thrift, or the talent that God bestows upon him." "Integrity" or moral and material competence, and "worth" or sufficient means, had their reward as we shall see later. First among those who succeeded in agriculture and winning wealth was the hospitaller (9), the *briugu leittech*, with rank and honour-price equal to the *ruiri* or over-king—the great inn-keeper whose house stood at the meeting place of three roads, whose "cauldron" was never dry, and who owned two hundred servants and two hundred of every kind of domestic animal and fowl. Next to him in rank, equal to a *rí*, was the "hundredful" *briugu* with a hundred of all necessary servants, herds, and flocks. Wide lands were allowed for their services of public hospitality; they were by far the most wealthy of the landed nobility;

and the obligations laid on them were possibly a way of using their great riches for the good of the community(10). In tradition there were five or six famous mansions for hospitality on a large scale, each with seven doors, traversed by seven alleys, and furnished with seven hearths and their huge cauldrons; one of them was on the great court road at Tallaght, another the bountiful great hall of Almain by the Curragh of Kildare. In time of a hosting there was provision for a king or leader with his company of soldiers. Travellers on the road had their fixed legal rights according to the "honour" or "life" price of each, assessed on his "worth (property), integrity, purity," unless a violation of honour had brought about a loss of degree. So many days' entertainment were allotted according to his rank, and so many loaves and their condiments to the fixed number of followers allowed him by law. The *briugu* had to know his world well—the exact place of every visitor, and who among them had sold his freedom or forfeited his honour-price. He had to run his risks, as the tales tell, of brawls, surprises, stormings of his banquet-hall and slaughter of the revellers. It is probable that the Norse wars at last put an end to this system of public hospitality; but the nobles and leading men still had certainly their fixed rights or claims which they could raise when they travelled round their estates for rent or on hosting.

In these orders of the state the officials—*rí*, *ollam* of the *filid*, *ollam* of the craftsmen, *ollam* of medicine or surgery and the rest—were chosen to their position by election. The tradition preserved by Keating is confirmed by *Crith Gablach*, that at the assembly of the *tuath* the leading man of each occupation was chosen as *ollam* for his *tuath;* and that at the Feis of Tara the most distinguished *ollam* of each art and science was appointed for the whole of Ireland. Magnates might indeed "degrade themselves into petty folk: a king who gives false judgment, a bishop who stumbles, a *fili* who

fails in his duty, an incompetent noble (without the material and moral integrity for the fulfilment of his duties). Who fulfil not their duties, to them no *díre* (or honour-price) is due" (11). So also the craftsman who broke the law, wasted his property, or by taking servile wages became a *doerchéle*, lost the privileges which belonged to franchise in the courts, and the honour-price that went with it.

By the provision that the *filid* and the craftsmen, even those of plebeian blood, might be classed among the *nemith*, Irish pagan law made a bridge by which conqueror and conquered could unite in the "sacred" freedom of learning and skill. The union of the peoples had begun when any man, whatever his origin, could enter the free classes by rising to the required rank in his school or trade, by his integrity and worth. "All are free by their wealth," said the laws; "all are unfree by their lips"—that is, a free man might diminish his franchise by a verbal contract selling his land, or his vassal-following, or the service of his body; or he might win a higher rank and increase his rights by industry, buying cattle and treasure, or gaining freedom through professional skill. In later times the Christian Church like the *filid* was indifferent to racial prejudice, and many noted ecclesiastics belonged to the ancient peoples. Its powerful influence in setting aside class distinctions is illustrated by the old tradition of the *fili* Dubhthach prophesying in the court of Loeguire that the stranger Patrick with his new teaching would steal from the king the living and the dead, and exalt the people of low status "through the orders of the Church."

There was no fixed monotony in Irish life; in the hands of peoples of such vitality and talent the ancient polity was ever changing through successive ages (12). Before the Norse invasion writers in Ireland were complaining of six ways "that confound the tree of genealogy" which the learned men were busily compiling for the aristocracy—(i) intrusion of base stocks "usurp-

ing the place of free stocks by name," perhaps non-Celtic fighting-men who took service with chiefs and were rewarded with grants of land; (ii) "migration of serfs, a way of shame," probably persons who succeeded in escaping the condition of being bound to the land; (iii) "decay of lords," possibly the result of a law of inheritance which brought about the re-forming of family groups at stated times, or it may be by the king's power of planting out lords so that the old rulers became reduced in rank and fell into obscurity; (iv) "withering of the free races, dreadful horror"; (v) "with over-growth of the vassal folk"; (vi) "miswriting in the guise of learning by the unlearned of evil intent, or the learned themselves, no whit better, who falsify the record for lucre." Illustrations of these troubles are given by Dr. MacNeill (13). The "mis-writing" may have been a habit of the north-eastern Picts who, abandoning their Pictish identity, and dropping their ancestral names, employed genealogists to invent a new pedigree for their nobility so as to trace their descent from the Ulidian hero Conall Cernach, and establish a claim to be the true *Ulaid* or Ulstermen. They sought also to connect themselves with the great Ulidian hero Cú Chulainn, of the native tribe of the Tuath Tabhairn. In Scotland they adopted personal names that had acquired some celebrity among their Gaelic and Cymric neighbours.

The growth of union was slow, and there remained localities where the physical marks of the old races were conspicuous, and popular custom kept the memory of the ancient peoples. But between 400 and 900 A.D. racial divisions gradually became a matter of formal tradition, and in the Laws of the eighth and ninth centuries the word *féni* remained only as a traditional term from an older world. The process of fusion was finally completed by the Norse invasions, when all the peoples of Ireland were banded together against the foreign pirates. So close did the union become that when by ancient custom this or that portion of the

community remained liable to pay tributes or taxes in virtue of being the successors of some ancient conquered territory, the old Irish archivists were careful again and again to say that the people themselves are free and that these imposts are attached only to the land on which they dwell. All Irishmen—Celts, Ebudeans, Ivernians, Picts, Fir Bolg, Galians—became known to each other by a common name of unknown origin, the *Goídil* or *Gael*, a Celtic word which may perhaps have been taken from the Cymric of the Welsh, as "Britons" had been taken from the Latin of Caesar. To strangers outside they were all alike known as Scotti. In course of centuries skilled patriots created for them a common ancestry and genealogy.

It is a striking fact that from the first national feeling in Ireland centred not in the race, but in the island itself, the home of all its peoples. They were united by the bond of a chivalrous loyalty to their common land, which from old days down to modern times has been constantly personified and called by the name of a woman. A legend told that when the Gaels arrived they found three queens reigning over the Men of Ireland, *Ériu*, *Fótla*, and *Banba;* and that the first words spoken by a Gael on Irish soil were an invocation to the island by the druid Amorgen: "I entreat the land of Ériu." An old metrical list of Irish monarchies begins:—

> "High Ériu, island of the kings,
> Illustrious scene of mighty deeds!"

In a song of the tenth century the poet singing the glories of the Curragh of Kildare, and Ailenn the old fortress of Laigin kings, breaks off to exclaim: "God's counsel at every time concerning virgin Erin is greater than can be told" (14)—lines which Kuno Meyer pointed out have no parallel in European literature of that time. "Every son is sure of his foster-mother," said the sage Fintan, preserved in legend from the Flood

and called to Tara to tell "the progression of the history of Ireland, how it has been therein till now, and also how it will be until doom." "And this then is my foster-mother," said the sage, "the island in which ye are, even Ireland, and the familiar knee of this island is the hill on which ye are, namely Tara. Moreover it is the mast and the produce, the flowers and the food of this island that have sustained me from the Deluge until to-day." Amid the ruin and sorrow of the seventeenth century the same old affection inspired the words of the poet Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird: "The mother who nursed us is she, and when you have looked on her she is not unlovely." The tradition was carried on to the servants of "the Dark Rosaleen" and of "Caitilín ní Uallacháin." Possibly the island was of the right size—a size easily comprehended by human voyagers in their brief passage across time—so as to evoke by personal appeal and singular beauty an affection peculiarly intimate and familiar. Even the surrounding flood itself lost its fatal terrors as it became the friendly protector of the island, sending the Three *Tonns* or Waves of Erin into Glandore harbour in Cork, from the whirlpools of the north into the opening of the Bann, and over the deep sands below the fort of Dún Rudraige in Lecale; waves whose solemn roar carried warning of imminent danger, of threatening calamity to a hero, or of his death. Probably no portion of the earth has been so consecrated from first to last by the devotion of those whom it sheltered. The loyalty of the old Irish to a nation of divers peoples, made one by their sonship to the land that bore them, as it was the earliest and the most passionate conception of nationality in the "dark ages" of Europe, so it has remained among the Irish people the most generous in its inspiration and in the breadth of its fellowship.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER VI.

(1) P. 86. Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Law: Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16), p. 273, note 3.
(2) P. 87. *Ib.*, pp. 273, 277–279.
(3) P. 87. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 229.
(4) P. 88. Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Law: Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16), pp. 271, 279, 280. Cf. pp. 308–311.
(5) P. 88. O'Curry translates "gebech" by "cloth-figurer." The meaning of the word is now lost, but he may have had knowledge of it.
(6) P. 88. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," No. 69.
(7) P. 88. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colmán," p. 67 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XVII).
(8) P. 89. Kuno Meyer: "Triads of Ireland," No. 119 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XIII).
(9) P. 89. Eoin MacNeill: "Law of Status," etc., p. 276.
(10) P. 90. Confusion has been needlessly caused by writers who have confounded two totally distinct words—*briugu*, a public hospitaller, and *brugaid*, a large farmer.
(11) P. 91. Eoin MacNeill: "Law of Status," etc., pp. 315–316.
(12) P. 91. From about the eighth century the word *féni* no longer meant a race, but a class, the class of landed freeholders. Eoin MacNeill: "Law of Status," etc., p. 267.
(13) P. 92. Eoin MacNeill: "Early Irish Population-Groups," p. 93 (*R.I.A.* XXIX, c. 4).
(14) P. 93. "Hail Brigit," an old poem translated by Kuno Meyer, p. 13.

CHAPTER VII

SAINT PATRICK

It was into this world of changing order, of warrior kings, of mixed peoples—primitive races, modern Celts, and fashionable "rhetoricians" of Gaul—that the first saint of Ireland came, a stranger and exile for the love of God.

We have seen that in the fifth century Ireland was not isolated from the rest of the world. Its soldiers were to be found along the borders of the Roman Empire, from the Great Wall to the Severn and the Channel, and from the Rhine to the Pyrenees. There was a ceaseless traffic across the Irish sea from the Clyde to the Cornish peninsula—a coming and going of war-bands for raids and booty, or to make new settlements—emigrants from the north-east coast to Alba and the neighbouring islands: settlers from Brega to South Wales, pushed out by the advance of the Connachta to Tara; and yet others from the south crossing to the Cornish region. According to Nennius the sons of Lethan (the Uí Liatháin, an Eóganacht sept bordering on Youghal harbour) settled in Wales and south of the Severn. Crimthann Mór, king of Mumu, is reported in Cormac's Glossary to have had a fortress in Britain and to have been king of Ireland and Britain—that is, that he levied tribute in both. On the other hand the Annals tell of the first prey from Ireland by the Saxons in 434, probably marauders by sea from the English Channel after the Roman control of "the Saxon shore" had broken down. From the Gaulish ports traders pushed their way to the harbours of the

south, and along the east and west coasts. To imperial Rome it seemed that these traders had ventured to the very edge of the world. The old Irish, on the other hand, knew no limit to their universe. We may still see to-day the great brown beans, washed up as of old on the western strands and bays from a world invisible—a world beyond the ocean. They carried their message to the Irish, and ancient navigators put to sea in their coracles, amid the seals and leviathans and porpoises and many strange beasts that rose up round the coracle, and swiftly uprose the waves and the firmament trembled: but beyond the tempest they had vision of a world unknown and infinite, and made their wonder-tales of islands with fragrant apple trees and fair bright woods of hazel with golden yellow nuts, and lovely birds, with little bees ever beautiful on the tops of the flowers, and always a shapely hostel in the midst thatched with birds' wings, white and yellow and blue, and generous folk within.

The little state of Corcu Laigde or Dáirine in south-west Cork (once including the two Carburys and Beare and Bantry) claimed in its genealogies that its busy sea-going people were the first to receive Christianity (1). Among journeying soldiers, merchants, slaves, refugees, and wandering scholars, the new faith was early carried to the south, perhaps even to the west, where in Roscommon Patrick came on a grave with a cross over it. Traditions lingered of holy men before Patrick, though it was he who "increased faith and devotion." (2) Some scattered communities had been formed when in 431 Pope Celestine sent Palladius as the first bishop over the "Scots who believed in Christ." Of his few months' mission nothing is known: he is supposed to have landed in a Wexford harbour, and to have founded by the Ovoca "the House of the Romans," now Tigroney; and on the upland border of the south Laigin "The Lord's House," *Domnach Airte*. Nennius tells that he went oversea to the house of S. Ninnian where he died. In

432 A.D. S. Patrick was appointed bishop to take up the mission to the Scots.

In the universal catastrophes of that age he had known all sufferings—captive, slave, exile, and pilgrim (3). Son of a deacon and Roman decurion, he was born in the unknown village of Banavem Taberniae, "near the western sea." While Niall still reigned, about 405 A.D., raiders from Ireland fell on his father's small farm, slaughtered men and women servants, and carried off the boy of sixteen along with "thousands of men." The place of his slavery was the wide region of forest that stretched eastward of lough Neagh, known as Coill Ultach (Latinized as *siluam Uluti*) or the woody district of the Ulaid, now Killultagh. His master was Miliucc, of the people known later as the Dál Buain, whose lands lay from lough Neagh across the Lagan into parts of Antrim and Down—a territory the centre of which is now marked by "Killultagh House," half-way between Glenavy and Lisburn. A constant tradition (4) gives the remarkable rounded mountain Slíab Mis (Slemish), a perpetual land-mark through all Antrim, as the lonely height where the slave of the druid Miliucc herded swine, "chastened exceedingly, and humbled in truth by hunger and nakedness, and that daily." "Constantly I used to pray in the day time . . . so that in one day (I would say) as many as a hundred prayers and as many at night, so that I used to stay even in the woods and on the mountains. And before day-break I used to be roused to prayer, in snow, in frost, in rain; and I felt no hurt, nor was there any sluggishness in me—as I now see because the spirit was fervent in me." After six years, voices in the night called him to escape—"thou who art soon to go to thy fatherland"—"lo, thy ship is ready"; and he fled, travelling two hundred miles to a port where he was taken on a cargo-boat by a heathen crew with Irish dogs for sale. Three days' voyage brought them to a land waste and desert, where they nearly died of famine.

Thus once more he went into captivity, but escaped after two months. After a few years he was in Britain with his kindred, who besought him after his great tribulation not to depart from them. But again visions of the night came to him: he saw a man coming as it were from Ireland with countless letters, who gave him one, "the Voice of the Irish," "and while I was reading . . . I thought that at that very moment I heard the voice of them who lived beside the wood of Foclut which is nigh unto the western sea. And thus they cried out as with one mouth, 'We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more.' And I was exceedingly broken in heart, and could read no farther." Another night the voice spoke again, "whether within me or beside me I cannot tell, God knoweth," and affirmed, "he who laid down his life for thee, it is he who speaketh in thee." "Every time that Patrick slept," ran a later Irish story, "it was the isle of the Gael that he saw before him."

There has been much perplexity as to the site of this *Silva Focluti* nigh to the "western sea"; in the attempt to explain it Patrick has been transplanted to Connacht nigh to the Atlantic shore. Dr. MacNeill, however, has shown that the *Silva Focluti* was a later corruption in a changing language of the original term "siluam Uluti"; and that the Irish Sea parting Ireland from Britain was to every Briton-born, and so to Patrick from his childhood up, no other than the "western sea." (5) Irish tradition has triumphed, and Patrick has been restored both in his slavery and in his mission to the place which had been kept sacred to him in the hearts and memory of generations of faithful Irishmen.

To prepare for his work Patrick took up the study of Christian learning, of canon law, and of Latin, the polite language in Britain which, as we gather from his "Confession," he had spoken in his youth but forgot in his captivity. He journeyed through Gaul and northern Italy; visited the island of Lerins, where a

monastery had been founded by S. Honorat in 410; probably followed the hermits withdrawn to the desolate rocks which lay thrown, as S. Ambrose said, on the flood like a collar of pearls. At Auxerre he worked for fifteen years. Kinsmen, elders, friends, and enemies alike opposed his mission. Critics mocked at his ignorance; among the saints of God he felt himself "Patrick the sinner"; among the professors he was "a clown, and exile, unlearned verily"—"the most clownish and least of all the faithful, and contemptible in the eyes of very many." By friends who opposed the Irish adventure "many gifts were proffered me with weeping and tears." To Roman citizens Ireland was the outer limit of the world, buffeted all round the year by a billowy and tempestuous ocean, the home of barbarous Scotti and Gwyddyl, of pirates and savages who made no difference between lawful and unlawful—a land lying outside the only conceivable form of ordered society as established in the Empire. "Why does this fellow," they said, "thrust himself into danger among hostile people who know not God?" Patrick had but one answer, "Is it from me that springs that godly compassion which I exercise towards that nation who once took me captive and made havoc of the men-servants and maid-servants of my father's house?" "I did not proceed to Ireland till I was nearly worn out." But his years of trial he counted gain, "because I was amended by the Lord." "And me the abhorred of this world did he inspire . . . only that . . . I should faithfully be of service to the nation to whom the love of Christ conveyed me, carrying the Gospel to the limits beyond which no man dwells."

The Romans had left Britain (401) and released its people from their allegiance to the emperor (410); and the Saxons had already begun their raids in Kent when in 429 S. Germanus of Auxerre made his first mission journey to the distracted British Church, preaching to vast crowds in churches, at cross-roads, in the fields.

After his return in 431 he probably consecrated Patrick to succeed Palladius as bishop for the Irish mission (432) (6). Tradition tells that his first landing was on the coast of the south Laigin, from which Palladius had apparently been driven. Patrick in his turn seems to have been repulsed by the king of the Uí Cennselaig, and we can well understand from the relations of the Tara kings, Niall and Loeguire, with the Laigin leaders that the district was in no way prepared for a peaceful Christian mission. He was forced to sail on a course to the north, touching at various harbours and islands till he reached the dangerous strait which forms the sole entry to the great fiord of Loch Cúan (Strangford) —an arm of the sea eighteen miles long—with its traditional three hundred and sixty-five islands.

No one who has watched in the narrow neck of the fiord the fierce race of the tide when the water level falls swiftly in the Irish Sea, or who has followed the course of Patrick's boat within the loch when this danger was surmounted, can doubt that the journey was carefully planned beforehand (possibly from Candida Casa), and guided by a skilled pilot of the country (7). West lay the wide sweep of the land-locked waters, with the swirling tides round the ominous dun and bare level hand-breadth of desolation, "Dúnnaneill of the hostages" (harsh prison of the forfeited hostages of the Uí Neill); with the heavy dark cormorants winging their ceaseless way across the waters from harbour to harbour, like omens of the future black pirates. A scarcely noticed creek suddenly breaks the border-line, sweeping among swamps and islands wooded to the water's edge, to end in the marshy mazes of the Quoile round the ancient rath of Dún Celtchair (Downpatrick). Opposite Castle island Patrick's boat entered the windings of the sluggish stream Slaney through the morass, till it came to the border of dry land at what was probably even then an old water-store, where a trackway of two miles led east along the edge of firm ground to Dún

Celtchair, and struck west to the good harbour of Walshestown on the loch near the narrow neck of Strangford. There his men lay down "to put their weariness from them." The landing-place had clearly been chosen and prepared for, and good watch kept. A swineherd brought news to Díchu lord of the territory, whose fortified post on the slopes of Slieve-na-Griddle still remains as one of the great earth-works of the district. Díchu, by repute "a good-natured man," when he saw the face of Patrick, became his convert, "the first of the Scots" in those parts. He gave a sheep-barn close to the track-way—Sabal Pátraic, the Barn of Patrick—as the first church to be set up, facing as it did north and south, not as all other early churches east and west. Tassach, Patrick's artificer of altars and vessels and book satchels, was established less than two miles off at Raholp—a fort above the track to the sea, guarded by a trench and circle of earth and stone-work, with water supply from a well: it may have been the first example of a warrior's rath turned to Christian uses. The tiny church of rough stones cemented with clay, and its many old crosses, have been piously safeguarded from utter ruin. Patrick himself wrote for each mission station the "alphabets" or elements of the faith.

Mag-inis, now Lecale, witnessed the beginning and the end of Patrick's mission, from his first convert Díchu to his last communion at Saul given him by Tassach of Raholp, and his burial at Downpatrick. Lying below the over-towering Mourne mountains the "island" Lecale was surrounded by the sea and its fiords, cutting deep inland by the Quoile round Dún Celtchair with its tradition of warriors driven from Emain Macha, and at the bay of Dún Rudraige (Dundrum), scene of the feast given by Bricriu of the Poison Tongue to Conchobor mac Nessa. Rivers from the mainland into the two bays left a mere isthmus of marsh. It was a well-peopled land. Circled round by ports it had plentiful trade and sea-fishing: marshes and shallow lakes

harboured wild birds innumerable : even lately hundreds of swans have been counted on the lake by Killough. There were plentiful deer and small animals, sheep on the hills, tillage. Centuries later no spot in Ireland gave so rich a food and rare a sport to a long succession of invaders. We may judge of the earlier peoples from their stupendous works, such as the stone-circle at Ballyalton, and the greater one at Ballynoe, planned on noble lines quite different from the circle of Stonehenge. Its outer ring of giant stones, a hundred feet across, contains an inner ellipse ninety by forty feet, which at its point converges on a great stone of the outer circle : possibly a greater circle lay beyond these. Earthen forts and burial mounds lie around, and crown the hills, one surrounded by a deep fosse, with a rampart twenty to thirty feet high. South of these massive ruins the mighty fort of Brechtain or Bright commanded the whole plain within the vast circumference of the sea ; while the huge burial mound of Rathmullan, and not far off a residential fort with terraces of defence, still dominate the south to Dundrum. The influence of Patrick embraced the whole pagan territory of the " island "—from the famous S. Patrick's Wells gushing out of the rock of Slieve-na-Griddle which he reclaimed no doubt from an older worship. Some two dozen early churches marked his authority—among them *cell chleithe*, the hurdle church (Kilclief).

It was in the second half of Patrick's life, from forty-three to seventy-two years of age, that he undertook his arduous mission. " He preached for three-score years Christ's Cross to the people of the *féni* " (8). His constant rule, as his " Confession " tells us, was to " keep himself," accepting no gifts, returning the ornaments cast by devout women on the altar, taking " not even so much as half a scruple from the thousands " he baptized, nor from those whom he ordained " even the price of my shoe." Among the thousands of his converts, from the noblest rank and the poorest, his pity went out

above all to the slave women who endured beyond others terrors and threats. His integrity never faltered: "As regards these heathen amongst whom I dwell I have kept faith with them and will keep it." Of "his own" (which must have been the lawful revenue of lands granted him) he gave presents to kings and judges, and hire to their sons who accompanied him for his protection. He shared the lot of his servants, sleeping among his household; so that Benignus, the boy he had adopted at his landing, had pity on him and at night all the odorous flowers that the gillie found he would put into the cleric's bosom (9). "Daily I expect either slaughter, or to be defamed or reduced to slavery." Seized by pagans, he narrowly escaped death. He had been plundered and bound with irons for fourteen days. To the last he felt his isolation, in exile among the outermost people of the earth, relics of vanished ages, with their barbaric pomp, their fierce pride of provincial aristocracy, their pagan philosophy. Readers of the old Irish sagas will understand, as Dr. Bergin has said, what it meant for a grave citizen of the Roman Empire to sympathize with the proud and passionate aristocrats among whom his lot was cast. At best they were to him splendid barbarians. Druidism, abolished in Gaul three centuries before by Roman law, must have seemed to him the very mark of barbarism; here the druid was first in honour, so that the king must be silent till he had spoken, and formal symbols in their magic still recalled primitive sacrifices to pagan gods. Roman privileges counted for nothing in the land "beyond which no men dwell." "I was free-born . . . but I sold my noble rank—I blush not to state it, nor am I sorry—for the profit of others, in short I am a slave to Christ in a foreign nation." Neither in his "Confession" nor in the hymn of his disciple Sechnall is there any word of miracles, of curses, of magical triumph over sorcerers—all legends of a later time. The one miracle known to Patrick was the conquest by the Spirit

of his own sinful heart. "Whence came to me that gift, so great, so salutary, the knowledge and love of God, but only that I might part with fatherland and kindred?" With a great desire he longed for his own people, and to visit the brethren in Gaul, and behold again the face of the saints. It was forbidden him by his vow. "I dwell in the midst of barbarians, a stranger and an exile for the love of God."

In a country which had wholly escaped (and until the thirteenth century and very largely till the seventeenth century was still to escape) the successive steam-rollings that reduced Europe to nearly one common level, the most ancient races and customs survived side by side with the new. Whether by this commingling of peoples in local freedom, or by some racial inheritance, Irish life was marked by violent contrasts reflected in all its history and literature. The people were even then fiercely democratic, but instead of abolishing one-man government, like the Gauls and Galatians, the Irish maintained it in an early form down to the last days of their freedom. They clung to a conservatism that no intercourse could shake, side by side with an eagerness and success in grasping the latest novelties in arts and commerce. In the old literature startlingly modern thoughts and experiences jostle against the most primitive crudities. If we picture a society given over to the terrors of Nature-worship, where magic reigned supreme, where marriage customs licensed under a primitive code of manners extinct among continental peoples still lingered, and the privileged classes indulged in the grossest appetites, we must remember also the elements and power of a spiritual ardour and lofty asceticism, prepared by the philosophy of the druids who, "despising worldly things" (said Timagenes), "taught that the souls of men were immortal." Among the old ruling patrician classes, haughty and dominating, war was a sort of noble pastime, with its ferocious beheadings and mutilations, the stripping by

ancient law of the wounded in battle, the heads of the slain hung on the horse's saddle, held in the crook of the warrior's knee, lifted up before the vanquished to be recognized one by one, fastened as trophies on the houses (10). On the other hand, nowhere was there a more touching chivalry, compassion, and extreme sensibility for all creatures that had life. Máel Anfaid of Lismore seeing one day a little bird weeping and making moan, "O my God," said he, "what has befallen the creature yonder? Now I swear," said he, "that I will eat no food until it be revealed to me." So abiding there he beheld an angel coming his way. "Hail, cleric!" says the angel, "let the trouble of this vex thee no longer. Molua, Ocha's son, is dead. And for this cause the creatures lament him, for that he never killed any creature, little or big. And not more do men bewail him than the creatures, and among them the tiny bird thou seest."

Patrick's mission (432 to 461) practically covered the reign of Loeguire (*c.* 430–462), head of the new royal house which had planted half Ireland with its sons as territorial princes. Unless their favour was won the missionary had small chance. No doubt Patrick visited Tara. A famous epic after the ancient model, embodied in the preface to the *Senchus Mór*, recalls the splendour of the high-king's court at Tara, the gathering of kings, satraps, princes, chief men of the people, magicians and augurs with every wile and incantation, as once on a time their like had stood before the throne of Nebuchadnezzar. The druids lifted up their prophecies against the terror of the coming revolution. Patrick from the far-off summit of Slane, by the "Graves of the men of Fiacc" (one of the nine great prophets of Brega), defied the pagan flame of the idolatrous host by lighting his paschal fire. "Unless this fire be quenched this same night it will never be quenched," said the augurs, and in nine chariots the king and queen and chief druids thundered through the darkness ten miles across the

plain. "Some in chariots and some on horses," said Patrick, "but we in the name of the Lord." In the tale of marvel that follows the saint broke every astonishing miracle of the sorcerers by the more potent magic of his God.

This drama of miracle by Muirchu († 828), a learned man of the old pre-Celtic race bred in the tradition of the heroic sagas, gives to Patrick, stranger and exile, his place as the national hero of the whole people of Ireland. We have, however, another account in a law-tract written probably at the close of the seventh century, which gives an older tradition of the authority, exercised without curse or wonder-working, of this extraordinary man. This account, given me by Dr. MacNeill, shows the position which Patrick held in the leading law schools two hundred and fifty years after his death.

"The earliest account of Patrick's coming to Tara is embodied in the law-tract *Córus Béscna*.* It was afterwards expanded into the legend prefixed to the *Senchus Mór*. One of the oldest pieces of S. Patrick's biography, it has this particular importance that it comes from a lay source, whereas the other early accounts come mainly through the Armagh clergy. I give a translation correcting the official translation in some particulars.

"'Every law that is here [in the *Senchus Mór*] was binding until the two laws were united. The law of nature it was that the Men of Ireland had until the coming of the Faith in the time of Loeguire, son of Niall. It was in his time that Patrick came. When

* "Ancient Laws of Ireland," III, p. 26. The often-quoted legend in the Introduction to the *Senchus Mór* is developed out of the simple story told here, and quotes part of it word for word. *Córus Béscna*, in which the story here is contained, is one of the principal books of the *Senchus Mór*. Consequently the *Senchus Mór* was not compiled in Patrick's time.

"The account gives the traditional view of Patrick's influence in shaping the general politico-social condition of Ireland, this view being stated in the form of a prophecy by the druid Matha."

the Men of Ireland accepted the Faith from Patrick, the two laws were combined, the law of nature and the law of the letter (*i.e.* of Scripture).

"'Dubthoch moccu Lugair, the *fili*, expounded to Patrick the Law of Nature. The same Dubthoch was the first who did reverence to Patrick, the first who stood up to receive him in Tara. Corc son of Luguid was the first who bent the knee to him; he was held hostage [at the time] by Loeguire.* Now Loeguire stood out against Patrick because of the druid Matha son of Umór.† This man had foretold to Loeguire that Patrick would steal the living and the dead from him: "he will free slaves, he will magnify kins of low degree through the grades of the Church and the service of repentance to God; for the kingdom of Heaven is open to every kindred of men who have believed, alike to kindreds free and unfree; even so the Church is open before every man, whosoever cometh under her government." ‡

* "In the longer and later story, Corc was one of the three kings who joined in the revision of the laws. It is evident that, if this episode had been known to the writer of *Córus Béscna*, he would have given some indication of it here where he mentions Corc. It is probable that Corc's son, Nat Fróich, was king of Munster at this time, for the writer does not say that Corc was king of Munster, and Patrick, when he first went to Cashel, is said to have 'baptized the sons of Nat Fróich.' One of these, Oengus, became king of Munster, and having invaded Leinster was killed in battle in 490 or 491. According to the 'Annals of Ulster,' *Senchus Mór* was 'written' in 438."

† "The 'sons of Umór' were of 'Fir Bolg' stock and dwelt in western Connacht—see 'Place-Names of Clare Island.'"

‡ "This is a noteworthy passage. It shows that in the oldest tradition of S. Patrick, he exercised an influence against slavery. See his Epistle, where he denounces the enslavement of Christians. The fact that 'the grades of the Church' took no account of nobility or ignobility in race or kin must have helped to break down any racial distinctions that had survived; and the Laws take no account of such distinctions. Before the continuation of the prophecy, 'he will free slaves,' the text has two interpolated passages. Interpolation is proved by the breach of context, the absence of any gloss on these passages, and the use of a Middle-Irish verb-form in one of them."

" ' Dubthoch moccu Lugair, the *fili*, declared the law-rules of the Men of Ireland according to the law of nature and the law of prophets, for prophecy had ruled in the law of nature, in the jurisprudence of the Men of Ireland, and in her men of lore (*filedaib*). Prophets too among them had foretold, " the white speech of Beatus will come to us," that is, the law of the Letter.*

" ' Many things which they had reached in the law of nature, but which the law of the Letter had not reached, Dubthoch showed also to Patrick. That which did not come against the Word of God in the law of the Letter and against the conscience of the faithful, they (Patrick and Dubthoch) combine in the order of jurists for the Church and the men of Irish learning (*filida*). The whole law of nature had been right except the Faith and its right, and the harmony of Church with State (*tuaith*), and the dues † of each of them from and towards the other; for there is the due of the State towards the Church, and the due of the Church towards the State.' " ‡

* " ' The white speech of Beatus ' really means Latin, and it is called by this kenning because the pupils who learned Latin in the Church schools began with the Psalms, and the first Psalm in Latin begins with *Beatus*. According to Poseidonios (about 100 B.C.), quoted by Strabo, three classes of men are held in special honour among the Celts, the bards (*βάρδοι*), the prophets (*οὐάτεις*) and the druids (*δρύιδαι*). The bards are makers of hymns and poems, the prophets are sacrificial priests (*ἱεροποιοί*) and physiologists (*φυσιολόγοι*), the druids cultivate philosophy in addition to physiology and ethics.' The Greek word for the Celtic prophets is a transliterated Celtic word identical with the Irish word *fáthe* used in this text."

† " The word *dliged*, which I translate by ' due,' means either ' right ' or ' duty ' according to the side from which it is regarded. *Tuath*, which I translate by ' State,' means the free civil community."

‡ " The text then proceeds to expound these dues.

" The passage rendered above is one of the most noteworthy in the laws or indeed in early Irish literature. It shows the hand of an author working on the older traditional material. This piece of narrative forms a convenient transition from a section on purely Irish civil law to a section on certain relations between the civil and the ecclesiastical order. If I am correct in the view that the glossed texts of the laws represent

Dr. MacNeill adds a further reference in the Laws, which records the forbidding by Patrick of severities of litigation for the common folk that brought hardship upon the men of Ireland.* There were two classes of exempt things: (1) things wholly exempt from suit, things which everybody might use or take; and (2) things the use or taking of which constituted a minimum breach of right, for which a maximum atonement was fixed, the same for all classes of persons. The first group included the pottage-herbs of every field, the leavings of a kiln, the gathering of a threshing-floor, scraps of a forge, ashes of every hearth except sea-ash, etc., driving a horse with a view to buying him, the biting of a hound. A long list of these exemptions was ordained according to the command of the rulers of the men of Ireland, "and Patrick adjudged them free for every condition of persons." "By proof of conscience and of nature and of scripture these wholly exempt things have been settled from the beginning of the world to the end, without suit, without payment": the overflow of every dyke, the nail of a hook, necessary aid around a plough, etc. The second list included destroying a fence, breaking the rules of an assembly, grinding in a mill, and such like, offences for which a small fine was paid, for in that "much may not be paid for little and that nothing may be without payment and that none may use that which is not his. For Patrick has bequeathed . . . that these . . . payments should not go beyond

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the oldest written recensions and belong to the seventh century, this passage is the oldest known piece of biography of S. Patrick. The story of the revision of the Irish laws by S. Patrick and others, told in the old introduction, is a free development of the narrative here, part of which it repeats verbatim. The notion of 'the law of nature' is derived from Roman jurisprudence, probably indirectly through Christian writings, for the early Irish law tracts . . . exhibit no trace of an acquaintance with Roman law.

"It will be noted that nothing is said in this account about the *writing* of a code of laws."

* "Ancient Laws," V, 476 *seq.*

what we have recounted in the proof of nature and of conscience and of scripture; . . . for these are the equal supplemental payments that Patrick has fixed in the custom of the men of Ireland after the establishment of the Christian Faith."

Patrick's influence must have gone far before he could even be supposed to touch the sacred fabric of ancient custom; and the unknown jurist bears a fine testimony to the reputed understanding, tolerance, and wisdom of the apostle as preserved in the learned tradition of the law. The memory of his protection of the common folk survived through later centuries in the solemnity and popular emotion with which the reliquary of the saint was carried before the "King's seat" at Tailtiu, for the more solemn administration of oaths in some grave case of law.

Patrick, however, made no progress with the king, possibly from Loeguire's fear of the druid's prophecy. His father Niall had heard of "the coming of the Faith," and enjoined his sons not to accept it, and Loeguire kept his word and died a pagan. There was a story that he refused to believe unless Cú Chulainn in his war-chariot were called up before his eyes (11). But he was tolerant and liberal. "As Patrick was going east from Domnach Patraic to Tara unto Loeguire—for they had made friendship . . . they had made an agreement between them that Patrick should not be slain during his reign. But Loeguire was unable to believe. 'Niall,' saith he, 'my father, when he heard the false prophecy, the coming of the Faith, enjoined us not to believe, but I should be buried in the topmost part of Tara, like warlike men.'" (12) When Patrick passed to Tailtiu, Loeguire's brother Coirpre sought to slay him and scourged his household into the Blackwater. Another brother Conall was baptized and gave his own fort hard by for the building of the "great church" at Donaghpatrick. A church was founded at Trim under

the rule of Loeguire's son, Feidlimid, whose wife from Britain was probably a Christian. Tara was in fact surrounded with mission stations. In the older centre of the conquering kings, the hill of Uisnech, "two sons of Niall, Fiacha and Énna, came against him," and a grandson slew some of the clerics who were with the mission. But Patrick left on Uisnech the "stone of Coithrige" (or Patrick) which he blessed and doubtless marked with a cross.

Germanus of Auxerre, apparently head of the Irish mission, had sent Gaulish helpers to his aid. Patrick himself was bishop of Armagh, representing the old Emain Macha. He established close to Tara the Gaul Sechnall or Secundinus, at Dunshaughlin, who is said to have written there in praise of Patrick the first Latin hymn in Ireland. A third Gaulish missionary, Auxilius, left his name in Kil-essy on the border-land near Naas, one of the old forts of the Laigin kings. A fourth, Iserninus, also almost certainly a Gaul (called by the Irish "bishop Fith," whatever that may have meant), was settled at Aghado on the Slaney south of king Énna's fort of Rathvilly. Four main bishoprics were thus established at the leading centres of the Ulaid, the Tara kings, and the two divisions of the Laigin.

It is impossible now to trace the journeyings of Patrick. His own writings, his "Confession" and his "Letter to Coroticus," about 454 and 459, give no help in this matter. In later days every kingdom claimed him, and every spot famous in Irish history had its tradition of his presence. The stories, if they are evidently false in order and chronology and even in actual fact, give vivid pictures of the memories and emotions of that old world. He probably crossed the border of Mumu. Tradition had told of a hostage in the court of Tara, Corc, son of the king of Cashel, as the first who knelt to him; and if he visited the fort it must have been when Corc's son was reigning, and Patrick "baptized the sons of Nat Fróich"—Oengus, the first Christian

king of Cashel, being one of them; for whose greater glory the fable was invented that in the ceremony Patrick accidentally struck his crozier through the foot of Oengus, who bore without flinching what he supposed to be a part of the baptismal office. It was inevitable that Patrick's presence should be claimed by the older Eóganacht kings who ruled in the west before ever Cashel was occupied. A legend of the ninth century told that he stood on the hill of Ardpatrick near Áine (or Knockany) south of Loch Gur, and looking out from that commanding height left his blessing on the men and women of Mumu and its flag-stones (13). If he ever in fact visited the wealthy south, the happy refuge of foreign scholars, he may there have encountered and suffered under the lofty contempt of the "rhetoricians"—"those who think themselves wise, and skilled in the law, and mighty orators, and powerful in everything." However deeply he had studied Christian doctrine his Latin remained barbarous: "almost as a boy I went into captivity in language," he lamented; others who had never changed their speech from infancy were always rendering it more perfect, while "my speech and language is translated into a language not my own as can be easily proved by the savour of my writing." His Latin in fact was doubtless even ruder in fashion than it now appears, after having passed on its way to us through many prudent emendations.

A fine legend tells of his visit to the home of the Connachta kings, where their families lived, whence each in his turn succeeded to Tara, and where each in turn was brought back to burial. At Crúachu Loeguire's two daughters were under training of the druids. As Eithne the White and Fedelm the Red went out at sunrise to the well, Patrick and his clerics stood before them in their white cloaks like men, it seemed to them, of the immortal race. "It were better," said Patrick, "for you to believe in the true God whom we worship than to ask questions about our race." Then the elder girl

said, "Who is God? Where does he dwell? Has he sons and daughters, your God, and has he gold and silver? Is he in heaven or in earth, in the sea, in the rivers, in the hill places, in the valleys? Tell us how we may know him, in what wise he will appear?" (*i.e.*, which of the nature gods is he?) And Patrick told them of "the God of heaven and earth, of sea and rivers, of sun and moon and stars, of the lofty mountain and the lowly valleys, the God above heaven and in heaven, and under heaven. . . . He inspires all, he quickens all, he dominates all, he supports all. He lights the light of the sun; he furnishes the light of the night; he has made springs in the dry land, and has set stars to minister to the greater lights. . . . I wish to unite you with the heavenly King, as ye are daughters of an earthly king. Believe. . . ." Then Patrick baptized them in the fountain and placed a white veil on their heads, and they begged that they might behold the face of Christ. And Patrick said, "Unless ye shall taste of death, ye cannot see the face of Christ, and unless ye shall receive the sacrifice." They answered, "Give us the sacrifice that we may see the Son, our bridegroom." And they received the Eucharist, and fell asleep in death. . . . The maidens were buried in a round tomb near the fountain. Their grave was dedicated to God and to Patrick and his heirs after him, and he constructed a church of earth in that place. Tradition told of "a sepulchral mound compact of sods" where the chiefs of Connacht made obeisance to Patrick and laid their heads in his bosom. The church of Baslic (basilica) near Crúachu may carry in it the memory of Gaulish monks: it is possible that the word generally used—"domnach" (*domnicus*, for *dominicus*)—the traditional name for churches (not monasteries) founded by Patrick may be a translation of "basilica."

A curious story remains of northern Sligo. It tells of a law-suit brought to Tara by the seven sons of Niall's brother, Amalgaid, who had died about 444–454.

One of the disputants shut out from the court cried in his anger that he was Conall, son of Énna, from the wood of Fochlad. This word alone shows that the tale was later than Patrick's time. "Thither will I go with thee, for God bade me go," said Patrick who stood by. In spite of warnings he set out under protection of the pagan chief, and the warranty of Loeguire for his safety in the newly-planted lands of the Uí Neill. Amalgaid, established by his brother Niall in north Sligo, held his kingly assembly near the head of Killala bay. On the coming of Patrick his successor Énna was said to have accepted the new faith, along with the seven sons of Amalgaid, and Conall.

There were perhaps no communities with a worse reputation in legend than the wild and rude borderers of the new Airgíalla and Connachta—harsh lands of barren mountain, of lakes and swamps and forest. The bitter experiences which Patrick recounts in his Confession may have happened to him in this region. A late and very doubtful legend tells of a gilded pillar of Cromm Crúach in the plain of Mag Slécht (in the modern Cavan) standing in a pagan circle of pillar-stones; which it was supposed that Patrick struck down with his staff. The Uí Neill seem to have been his steadfast friends and helpers. Coirpre of Niall's house gave him a site for a church on his wild territory, near the modern Granard. There was a firm tradition that on some journey in dangerous land he was guided and protected by Conall Gulban of Tír Conaill, brother of Loeguire and ancestor of Columcille; and that Conall was slain by the pagans, and his twin-brother Eógan of Ailech died of grief for his loss.

Legends remain of his travels in the northern Fifth; from the ford at Assaroe (where little boys were kind, and were blessed by him so that boys long after caught fish in that river); and even beyond the Uí Neill fortress of Ailech where Eógan had died, as far as the port of Moville. In Airgíalla he marked with his staff the

sitę of the church of Armagh in the land conquered a hundred years before by Colla dá Chrích. The force of his character is shown in the story by Muirchú, preserved in the Book of Armagh. "Then Dáire (king perhaps of Airgíalla) came after these things to honour S. Patrick, bringing with him a wonderful brazen cauldron from beyond seas (*eneum mirabilem transmarinum*), which held three firkins. And Dáire said unto the saint, 'Lo, this cauldron is thine.' And S. Patrick said, '*Gratzacham*' (a corruption of the Latin *Gratias ago* or *agam*). Then Dáire returned to his own home and said, 'The man is a fool, for he said nothing good for a wonderful cauldron of three firkins, except *Gratzacham*.' Then Dáire added and said to his servants, 'Go and bring us back our cauldron.' They went and said to Patrick, 'We must take away the cauldron.' Nevertheless this time also Saint Patrick said, '*Gratzacham*, take it.' So they took it. Then Dáire asked his people, saying, 'What said the Christian when ye took away the cauldron?' But they answered, 'He said *Gratzacham* again.' Dáire answered and said, '*Gratzacham* when I give, *Gratzacham* when I take away. His saying is so good that with those *Gratzachams* his cauldron shall be brought back to him.' And Dáire himself went this time and brought back the cauldron to Patrick, saying to him, 'Thy cauldron shall remain with thee; for thou art a steady and imperturbable man; moreover also that portion of land which thou didst desire before, I now give thee as fully as I have it, and dwell thou there.' And this is the city which is now named Ardd-Machae."

The eastern land beyond the Bann—last refuge of the ancient Ulaid, still called "Conchobor's Fifth," the traditional land of Patrick's slavery, was planted with Christian settlements. The greater part of the territory was ruled by Picts and other races of old time, and its divided states were long torn by wars and harassed by foreign invaders. The last we know of Patrick is his

Letter (*c.* 459) to the soldiers of Coroticus or Ceretic, ruler in Strathclyde, where for two hundred years past Scots from the northern shores of Ireland had crossed over. Coroticus had led a marauding expedition into Ireland: newly baptized and anointed converts—"it was still fragrant on their foreheads"—were seized among their prey to be sold into slavery "in a foreign nation that knows not God." Patrick's orders sent the next day for their release were jeered at by the raiders, and his Letter tells the fury of his wrath against the pirates—"fellow-citizens of demons."

This letter, at the end of his life, with its reproaches to the "degraded apostate Picts" of Galloway, his vehement denunciations of piratical war, the selling of captives into slavery, the killing of non-combatants, shows how great had been the changes Patrick had worked in Ireland, among them the abolition of slavery among Christians. Many influences in Ireland were indeed gradually making for peace. Fiana bands disappeared in the next generation, with their last pagan leader, the son of Mac Erca. In the seventh century the Irish kings ceased to dwell surrounded by their fighting men in great permanent encampments like Tara and Ailenn. "In Armagh is the Kingdom; long since has Emain been forsaken; Downpatrick is a great church, it is not dear to me that Tara should be desolate" (14). In the eighth century Bede wrote of the Irish as "a most harmless nation, ever most friendly to the English." Though Christianity had not itself power to put an end to mercenary bands and local wars, it did change the outlook of the Irish on war, and no single influence was more powerful in creating a new civilization. Men who had taken part in bloodshed were shut out from the immediate precincts of the churches. After Patrick's time not a single raiding expedition went out from Ireland.

The Church he founded was deeply marked by Gaulish influences; he himself taught in Ireland the ascetic

ideal, and initiated into monastic life scores of men and women. But if the monastic system was prominent in the Patrician church, it was not its universal form. The ecclesiastical order was in fact from the first in most intimate association with the system of lay government. The bishop was made equal in rank to the king in a system so ancient that the chief of a single *tuath* was as yet the only *rí* or king of recognized legal position. Bishops inherited or used an authority once practised by the ancient druids, who when armies were already advancing for shock of battle with drawn swords and lowered lances, rushed in between them and compelled peace; but as the old law-tract, *Córus Béscna*, distinctly states, the Irish bishops never assumed the place of the Brehons in matters of law. Fragments which remain of an early Rule—the *Ríagail Pátraic* (15)—show the Church, apparently by a long-established order, organized in dioceses and parishes in a specially Irish form—a chief bishop for every *tuath*, small churches of the *tuath* apart from the great churches (that is from the estated monasteries); and one priest to minister in each small church with fitting oratory, burial ground, and altar; though if the clergy were few (as in times of plague and famine) one priest might serve three or four churches. There was to be "lawful baptism before everything." The parish clergy were maintained by dues, just wage and sufficient ration, whereas the monastic clergy had lands and tenants for their support. Strong Irish influences may be seen in the distinctive tonsure which was unknown outside Ireland and may have been adopted from the druids, with whom tonsuring was a mark of dedication and the prefix *Mael* signified "the tonsured one." The front of the head shaven from ear to ear was supposed to give the appearance of an adze, from which came the term "Adze Head," *Talcenn*, applied in early literature to all Christian ecclesiastics, and even to Patrick himself.

Some two years after the Letter to Coroticus Patrick

died at Saul, where he had made his first "Scot" convert, and anointed for death by Tassach of Raholp, was buried at Downpatrick (461 A.D.).

Patrick had been trained in the single faith of an Imperial-Roman-Christian civilization as the only bulwark against "barbarism"; but early tradition of him in Ireland carries the memory of charity and liberal sympathy with his new people. He had his reward. No story can be more moving than that of Irish devotion to their apostle in its imperishable affection. The religious respect for all that concerned him made them hand down for five hundred years the tradition of his accustomed oath, *Mo Dé Broth*, "my God's doom," or "my God of judgment," thus preserving a quaint and interesting relic of early British or Irish speech (16). They made of him the very embodiment of the national soul, its surety and defender. In Middle Irish story, to quote Professor Bergin, "he appears as antiquarian and folklorist, charming and courteous, full of eager curiosity, an ardent collector of legends and poems, touring peacefully through a country that is always on the borders of fairyland." He was the maker of their laws; his blessing was on minstrelsy and the reciting of ancient tales—"to them that profess it be all happiness." "He preached by day on all their heights," "he blessed the rath of Drumderg where Finn mac Cumail had stayed, and sat with Caelte on the sodded mound piled over an ancient sepulchre": "by me and by thee," said Patrick when the pagan Caelte laid his head on the Saint's bosom in farewell, "whatever be the place in which God shall lay his hand on thee Heaven is assigned." In the land of the Laigin, after "he had sung his hours," he blessed "the hill of the kings," one of those he would "hold most dear in Ireland." "What is the most unfortunate thing is that it has no water in its vicinity," remarked the practical king of Connacht (17).

To this day thousands of pilgrims yearly climb the steep of Croagh Patrick overlooking the Atlantic, where

he was said to have fought his battle for the Irish nation, fasting "in much displeasure" for forty days, weeping until his face and chasuble in front of him were wet (18). He had but one answer for the angel sent after the forty days with promise after promise—"Is there aught else that will be granted me?" "Is there aught else thou wouldst demand?" said the angel. "There is," saith Patrick, "that the Saxons shall not abide in Ireland by consent or perforce so long as I abide in heaven." "Now get thee gone," said the angel. "I will not get me gone," saith Patrick, "since I have been tormented, till I am blessed." "Is there aught else thou wouldst demand?" saith the angel. Patrick required that on the day when the twelve thrones should be set on Mount Zion in the presence of heaven and earth and hell, he himself should be judge over the men of Ireland. "Assuredly," saith the angel, "that is not got from the Lord." "Unless it is got from Him," saith Patrick, "departure from this Rick shall not be got from me from to-day till Doom; and what is more, I shall leave a guardian there." The angel brought the message from heaven. "The Lord said, 'There hath not come, and there will not come after the apostles, a man more admirable, were it not for thy hardness. What thou hast prayed for, thou shalt have . . . and there will be a consecration of the men of the folk of Ireland, both living and dead.'" Saith Patrick, "A blessing on the bountiful King who hath given; and the Rick shall (now) be departed from." "And mighty birds were around him so that he could not see the face of the earth or sea or sky"—all the Irish saints past, present, and to come, whom God had called to bless the people of Ireland.

The mediæval legend bears witness (like the story of Dáire) to the universal belief in Patrick's extraordinary tenacity of purpose and indomitable will. He remained to the Irish with his mind ever fixed on the eternities, "a steady and imperturbable man." Among a people

with the keenest sense of character his integrity and fidelity were held in lasting remembrance; as he himself had written, "Let it not happen to me from my God that I should ever part with his people whom he has purchased in the ends of the earth." In after times Irish writers loved to regard him as a second Moses, the confidant of God, who asked and would not be refused, who led his people out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.

Armagh, to increase its fame and authority, put forward its claim that he had been buried there: but the constant tradition was that his bones rested in Downpatrick till the Norman conquest. De Courcey established a monastery of imported monks there. These strangers soon wearied of their life in a foreign and hostile country, and letters are still extant from them to the head of their order asking that they may be permitted to have a summer or holiday house in England, and offering, in exchange for this concession, to trade the relics of S. Patrick (19).

REFERENCES, CHAPTER VII.

(1) P. 97. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 80–82. "Phases of Irish History," p. 162. It extended over and beyond the modern diocese of Ross.
(2) P. 97. Plummer: "Lives of the Saints," II, p. 109.
(3) P. 98. "S. Patrick: His Writings and Life," translated by Newport J. D. White, D.D., 1920.
(4) P. 98. MacNeill: "Silva Focluti" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 14). Killultagh, a territory along lough Neagh to the west, with high hills eastward, includes the five parishes of Ballinderry (Derry-Killultagh), Aghalee, Aghagallon, Magheramesk, and Magheragall with a bit of Blaris. It had heavy oak woods and much bog and water, a rich soil and good apple country, with fish and game of all sorts abounding.
(5) P. 99. MacNeill: "Silva Focluti" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 14).
(6) P. 101. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 161–166.
(7) P. 101. Francis J. Bigger has made the most exhaustive study of this district, and I have to thank him for his guidance and counsel.

(8) P. 103. Stokes and Strachan: "Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus," II, p. 317.
(9) P. 104. Stokes: "Tripartite Life of Patrick," I, p. 37.
(10) P. 106. See, however, *Eriu*, VI, p. 157.
(11) P. 111. O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," pp. 94–95.
(12) P. 111. Stokes: "Tripartite Life of Patrick," I, pp. 73, 75.
(13) P. 113. Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 29.
(14) P. 117. Stokes and Strachan: "Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus," II, p. 317.
(15) P. 118. *Eriu*, I, p. 221.
(16) P. 119. Dr. Bergin has kindly given me the following note:—

"The word (or words) *Debroth*, *debrath*, *debrad*, *debrod*, *débroth*, etc., was not understood in the Middle Irish period. Scholars then made various guesses, some equating it with *Dia brátha*, 'God of judgment,' which cannot be right. It is even explained as Hebrew. According to Stokes *mo Dé broth* means 'my God's doom.' Cormac in his Glossary says it is Welsh, and this is the most plausible explanation: in Old Welsh *min doiu braut* would mean 'by the God of judgment': however, he takes the first word, which he spells *muin*, to mean 'my,' and doubtless it was so understood by the Irish who substituted '*mo*.'"

(17) P. 119. See "Silva Gadelica," II, 101 *seq.* "The Colloquy with the Ancients."
(18) P. 120. Stokes: "Tripartite Life of Patrick," I, pp. 117–121.
(19) P. 121. *Ib.*, p. 253; "Book of Lismore," p. 166. In Stokes's "Tripartite Life" there are lines which enshrine the old Irish belief in Patrick's special patriotism:

"It is Armagh that I love,
A dear thorpe, a dear hill,
A fortress which my soul haunteth;
Emain of the heroes will be waste."

CHAPTER VIII

THE EARLY CHURCH

In the comparative peace which followed the mission of S. Patrick, intercourse between Ireland and foreign churches rapidly increased, from Strath-Cluathe in the north—where soon after 400 A.D. S. Ninnian had carried his mission among the Picts and Scots, and founded the northernmost school of Christian learning at Candida Casa—to the south in Gaul. Already in the fifth century the Church of Roman Armorica was renowned (1); its peoples were great travellers, and their pilgrims to the churches of Palestine and to the hermits of the Egyptian desert brought back to their own land, and thence to Wales and Ireland, the eastern tradition which so deeply influenced the Celtic worship and its liturgies. When Britons flying before the Saxon invaders of the fifth century gave to Armorica the new name of Brittany, missionary enterprise was quickened by a fresh stimulus. From the earliest times the Irish were the chief pilgrims to the tomb of S. Martin at Tours, and to Rome. Sailing vessels that had long carried to her shores invading hosts, merchants, warriors, now bore new travellers—missionaries, scholars, pilgrims of the Christian communities. The fame of marauders fades before the envoys of peace and learning incessantly journeying among the new communities—Irish in Strath-Cluathe (Strathclyde), Wales, the Cornish lands, Brittany; Welshmen and Britons travelling in Ireland and Brittany; Bretons and scholars from Rome as guests in Irish monasteries: all speaking the same language in varying forms. From Brittany the passage to Ireland could be made in three days. From

the Loire it was two days longer, as we may see from a later Irish story of the sixth century which tells how a shipload of strangers, five decades of them, came sailing from the lands of Latium on pilgrimage to Ireland (2). Each decade of pilgrims chose an Irish saint to be their patron and protector, one in turn for a day and a night, which gives a voyage of five days and nights. As they neared the Irish coast a fierce storm arose, and the pilot called for help to the company of S. Senán, who was that day the guardian, whereupon a " humble bishop " of his household arose from dinner with a thigh-bone in his hand, and blessing the air with the bone called on Senán, who brought the pilgrims safe into Cork harbour. The humble bishop had been allotted the best joint, the portion which by Irish law was given to the king or the high-poet.

Neither sea, nor it would seem language, formed any dividing line between Welsh and Irish (3). Holyhead, in Welsh Caer Gybi, recalls the many years in Ireland of S. Cybi, and the clearing of the rock for his return. Each country alike was the home of all who sought the celestial city. Each added its share to the common learning and piety. We can trace two separate streams of Latin loan-words in the early Irish church, one through Britain, the other originally from Gaul. Patrick, both in fact and in the form of his own name, typifies the British stream, while Sechnall in both ways marks the Gaulish which was the more scanty of the two, unless as is possible many of its words gave place to the cognate words that came by Britain. Early associations with Welsh saints are recalled by " Patrick's seat," where in legend he first saw Ireland, and by " the causeway of S. Patrick "—a shoal running far into the sea at Portmadoc. The first Irish hermit in Wales, " Brynoch the Irishman," in the fifth century converted a leading Welsh chief, Brecan, founder of one of the " three holy places of Wales." The famous S. David was baptised by a bishop from Munster. Students and missionaries passed back and

forward, like Caradog or Cairnech, who converted whole districts in Ireland and there died in exile; "Gailinne of the Britons," now Gallen in King's County, was said to be founded by S. Mochonóg, son of a king of Wales (4). S. Aidus crossed over from Connacht. Tathai son of an Irish king, a hermit, founded a school in Wales early in the sixth century. A story tells of S. Fingar and his sister, children of a king of Connacht, martyred on the Cornish coast: S. Petroc, who founded a monastery in that peninsula, spent twenty years in Ireland. The Irish were in fact in the full stream of the overseas monastic movement. In the first half of the sixth century their students at Candida Casa in Galloway, or at S. David's in Menevia, soon rivalled their teachers, and in a score of years (540–560) their island was the chief centre of spiritual and apostolic life, drawing to itself from all the neighbouring states, and sending out to them in return teachers, scholars, and saints. The first monastic settlement is said to have been made by S. Enda at Killeany in the island of Aranmore, granted to him by the king of Mumu. Prince of a powerful house, he had studied at Candida Casa, and his monastery on the edge of the Atlantic attracted the most famous Irish and foreign scholars—Cybi from his monastery at Holyhead, who stayed four years in Ireland, the famous S. Samson from Brittany, and learned Scots coming from Rome. We may still see the inscription on stone in Aran to those unknown visitors the "VII Romani" (5). Within a few years a line of settlements lay across Ireland from the Liffey to the Shannon—Glasnevin near the mouth of the Liffey, the school of Mo Bhí the Leper who died in the plague of 544; Clonard under S. Finnén (*c.* 540), a pupil of S. David at Menevia, who had opened relations with Welsh Cadoc and the Briton Gildas, and brought back with him British disciples; Clonmacnois on the Shannon founded by Cíarán, the "son of the Carpenter" (*c.* 544); across the river, Clonfert a few years later by S. Brendan, the most famous navigator of the western seas, "an exile of

the *féni*," welcomed as a saint alike in Gildas' monastery of Ruys in Brittany and in the house of Columcille at Iona. The blessed Cadoc of Wales, son of an Irish mother, " thirsting eagerly for improvement in learning," sailed to Ireland " for the sake of teaching " : a strong boat besmeared with pitch was built to carry him and some chosen disciples across the Irish sea, and after diligent search for the most excellent master he chose Lismore, remaining there for three years under the chief doctor till he had gained " perfection in the learning of the West " ; and in the end carrying back with him a large company of Irish and British clergy. S. Coemgen (or Kevin) " the Fairbegotten " founded the monastery of Glendalough in a pocket of the Wicklow mountains, where the steep heights almost completely enclosed a mysterious lake, the centre of a heathen worship. There Kevin made his " Bed " in a hole of the cliffs, and set up his little Christian community close to the pagan shrine : he himself had studied under S. Petroc, who had come to Ireland (*c.* 492) from Cornwall; his uncle S. Eugenius had been trained at Rosnat, a monastery in Britain. S. Findbarr, trained by a teacher who had studied in Rome, somewhere about 613 founded his first monastery and school on Loch Eirc or Gougane Barra, amid the barren mountains which separate Cork from Kerry, where the river Lee takes its rise. Later he established his famous monastery in the harbour, the centre of the busy merchant town of Cork. In the North the earliest school was that of Mag Bile (Moville) on the northern shore of Loch Cúan, founded by S. Finnén, a scholar of Candida Casa across the water. The two coasts were in easy reach, and there was constant coming and going to the lough where trading boats gathered for the sheltered fishing, and for the rich merchandise of the tilled hill-sides of the Ardes sloping to the western sun. S. Finnén was a practical man and highly skilled. From a mountain lake he drew water to work the mill that amid the mockery of the inhabitants

he had built near Newtown Ards; and in later days he was famed for turning the course of the river Garnoch in Scotland and that of the Serchio in Italy. A second monastery, Bennchor, on the southern coast of the Belfast lough, was founded by S. Comgall (*c.* 558) on the busy highway of traffic between the peoples of the North and Alba, which was to rival the fame of Mag Bile.

The new settlements were not desert or solitary. They were planted along the main ways of communication, where travellers could find shelter in the guest house, and where traders, courtiers, messengers, warriors, pilgrims, were continually passing. The site was usually given to the saint by a prince of the ruling family of the *tuath*, a fort encircled by its rampart, in a position chosen for command or for defence or for its convenient and fertile surroundings. Monks and students built the new "monastic city," as it was called. They raised the little churches, round like a hive of bees, oval in the form of a boat, square after the Latin fashion, roofed with stone, thatch, or wood. After these came the refectory, guest-house, working-sheds, and oratories. Each student built his own round bothy of wood, or his square stone cell without mortar. All alike tilled the earth, and in turn ground in querns the corn needed for the school. For the rest they lived on alms (6). In the earliest monasteries where the aid of animals was forbidden they "put the yoke to their shoulders," dragged the plough and carried the harvest home on their backs. Prayer, study, and labour divided the day. Among the Irish the fervour of the people equalled the ardour of the missionaries, and the prodigious number of the foundations was astounding. The general affection was shown in the endearing names of the monasteries: "Chain of sweet omen," "Derry angel-haunted," "Bangor the chaste and lovely." Their spiritual exaltation was expressed in the severe discipline and extraordinary austerities of the new communities. In some monasteries a single meal a day was allowed—a little bread, an egg, a little

milk mixed with water, or a meal of vegetables and skim milk (7); in all the most extreme forms of fasting were used, fish and flesh often wholly forbidden, on Wednesday and Friday no food till nones. Psalms, hymns, prayers of confession and penitence were recited with forms handed down from the early Church, unceasing genuflections and prostrations, and the *crossfhigill* or "prayer of the cross" with extended arms, standing, kneeling, or prostrate—a custom which is still traditionally used in some places. The *tredenus* or three days' fast from all food has also lasted among country people till our own time: it is yearly practised by thousands at S. Patrick's purgatory in lough Derg. The extraordinary penances, as well as the harshness of daily life, demanded an heroic spirit and singular force of physical endurance. But there were many who sought a yet sterner discipline in a solitude beyond the monastery, a "desert" where in forest or marsh or rocky islet off the coast they might exercise the utmost rigours. Since the famous hermits of the African sands there had been no such examples of ascetic endurance as were practised by the monks of Ireland. The supreme "immolation" was to cut off the last earthly tie by forsaking their own land "for the love of God," "for the name of the Lord," "to obtain the celestial country." What exile meant to the Irish we know from the outburst of Noísiu, son of Uisliu: "One's own country is better than all; for all good things in whatever measure he hath them are uncomely to a man unless he look upon his country." Those who chose pilgrimage—"the *bachall* (or pilgrim's staff) of Becc Bairche" is the laconic entry of the chronicles—as the highest form of asceticism, were for the most part bound to travel on foot, and use neither horse nor cart, and records of Irish wanderers on the continent picture their extreme sufferings and destitution. It was no formal offering. "I desire to go overseas on pilgrimage," said a teacher to the virgin Samthann of Clonbroney, who answered: "Were God to be found overseas, I too would

take ship and go. But since God is near to all that call upon him, there is no constraint upon us to seek him overseas. For from every land there is a way to the kingdom of Heaven" (8).

The Irish Church preserved to the tenth and eleventh centuries usages and customs which came down from the very earliest Christian times, long after they had been condemned and forbidden by Councils. Fidelity to ancient tradition no doubt moved a people so profoundly conscious of the historic unity in all time of the spiritual life of peoples; but there was also an exaltation of enthusiasm, a freedom of mind, a lively response to every appeal to the soul, and a gaiety of adventure, which distinguish them from the German or English races. Privations were accepted with joy. Legends of the utmost beauty gathered round the memory of these early saints, the birds who came to nest in the hands of those enduring the pain of the *crossfhigill* prayer, the wild creatures flying to their arms for refuge, the hounds who refused to seize their quarry on ground where the saint had trodden, animals wild and tame obedient to their will. An old poem tells of Marbán (9), brother of king Guaire in Connacht, who had built his sheiling in the wood—"none knows it save my God," surrounded by "delightful music," "swarms of bees and chafers, the little musicians of the world," with robins, thrushes, cuckoos, and swans: "the bravest band make cheer to me, who have not been hired"—

> "Grateful to the Prince,
> He giveth every good to me in my bower."

The same vision of nature, beautiful and beneficent, inspires a Middle-Irish poem (10): "The saints of the four seasons, I long to pray to them, may they save me from torments, the saints of the whole year. . . . The saints of the glorious spring-time . . . together with Brigid. . . . The saints of the dry summer. . . . The saints of the beauteous autumn, I call on a company not

inharmonious. . . . The saints of the winter, may they be with me against the throngs of demons, around Jesus of the mansions, the holy heavenly Spirit." Irish religion was in fact the expression of irrepressible hope—a buoyant spirit that at the very edge of the world made them dream of islands in the Ocean where divine beings dwelt—the Land of the Young, the Happy Plain, the Great Strand. As we read in the story of S. Brendan, "your dwelling is hard by Paradise, and near you is the island which is called 'the Promised Land of the Saints.'"

Immortality in Ireland as in Gaul was an ancient national faith, as old as the druids. By some hereditary inspiration the day of death was to the Irish "the day of birth"; the grave known only as "the place of resurrection." Death itself was an act of the inspired will of man—"he sent his spirit to heaven" was the common phrase. The figure on the cross was represented in the old time as that of a living king, with arms straight outstretched, a royal crown, a richly ornamented kilt, and jewelled nails in hands and feet, while supported by the right hand of God he stood triumphant on the tree of life (11). The depth of spiritual emotion is manifest in the private prayers, the litanies of petition, the confessions and entreaties and invocations in which they poured forth their repentance, their passion of devotion, their terror of encompassing dangers to body and soul, their self-distrust and abasement before the Eternal justice and goodness, their joy of resignation: "All alone in my little cell without a single soul in my company! Beloved pilgrimage before going to the tryst with Death"! (12) Moving all hearts by their spiritual ecstasy, these private prayers were borne throughout Europe, carried from saint to saint, copied in their manuscripts, and even imitated by foreigners. Some of the Latin penitentials which began to appear in different parts of the Continent, probably about the middle of the eighth century, are of Irish origin. From the sixth

and seventh centuries indeed the Irish, latest in the order of conversion, took the lead in Europe. Their sense of permanent realities appears in the quatrain of a pilgrim in the eighth or ninth century :

> " To go to Rome
> Is much of trouble, little of profit,
> The King whom thou seekest here,
> Unless thou bring him with thee thou dost not find " (13).

With the Irish ascetic fervour was no fleeting passion. For five hundred years to come they clung with unabated zeal to their old religious traditions. A thousand years after the foundation of the earliest monastic house, an English observer in the reign of Elizabeth described the Irish in their sufferings ennobled by " such mirrors of holiness and austerity that other nations retain but a show or shadow of devotion in comparison of them."

Columcille (521–596) (14), born sixty years after Patrick's death, was the most luminous figure in this early monastic movement—" the holy fair-haired Columcille." Tradition has preserved the memory of his birthplace, the flagstone of Ráith Cnó at Gartan on the face of a hill overhanging the little lake, Loch na Caillighe. Countless emigrants driven from their native land have made their last Irish journey over the dark moors and mountains of Donegal to the cold bed where he first lay, in the belief that to sleep on this hallowed stone would drive away home-sickness from the mournful banished. According to the old story he was fostered at Cell mac nÉnáin, now Kilmacrenan, and baptized at Tulach Dubhglaise of God, " the place of his first walking." His first name Crimthann was " cut away from him " and the change made from " fox " to " dove," as the children who played with him called him by the most popular name of that time, the Latin " Columb ; " and as they watched him ever coming to them from the church near his house added to it " Colum from the Cill "—Columcille.

Of royal descent, he was born into the most famous race of Irish history—the conquering house of Cormac the Law-giver, and fighting Niall of the Nine Hostages. A legend recalls his pride in forefathers whose glories were ever sung at every gathering by the *filid*. It tells of Columcille walking in the great cemetery of the Boyne, where a huge skull was brought to him, "far greater than the skulls of the people of that time." In answer to his earnest prayers it was revealed to him from heaven that this was indeed the very skull of his own ancestor in the tenth degree—Cormac grandson of Conn of the Hundred Battles—and "that though his faith had not been perfect, still he had so much of the faith and had kept righteousness so well" that his soul was not eternally damned, but awaited the prayers of Columcille of the royal seed: "Then he took up the skull and washed it reverently, and he baptized and blessed it and buried it afterwards." Tradition preserved for centuries the memory of his ancestor Conall Gulban son of Niall, with "the bright eyes in the hollows of his countenance," and his tragic doom at heathen hands. In Columcille's childhood his kinsman Muirchertach Mac Erca reigned in Ireland (503–527)—the first *ardrí* from the northern Uí Neill. A prince of the supreme royal line, heir of a proud tradition, Columcille had inherited from this honoured race the bearing of a great prince, with his lofty stature, his face changing with every emotion, illuminated and shining as that of an angel, the resounding voice and the sight and hearing so miraculously keen reported of generations of his house, and an eloquence of speech and wisdom in council which marked him as a leader of men. Fellow-countrymen recognized the high aristocrat in his vehemence, his passion, his stately generosity, and his enormous pride. They held it no blame to him to be reputed more lavish to the bards than any other saint in Erin. "There hath not nor will be born," was the legend, "save in the person of Christ, one that hath excelled him in largesse or hath been more tender in his

honour than he." A scholar of the best Irish masters in Druid and Christian lore, a scribe and poet, and the most far-sighted political thinker of his time, he was by training as well as birth fitted to be a counsellor of his nation. Truly Columcille was in strange contrast with the first apostle of the Irish, "Patrick the unlearned," the "stranger and exile" from somewhere over-seas, his very name and the place of his birth disputed, the slave-keeper of swine on the hills, pupil of foreign schools, and to the last the object of scoffing mockery from the classic "rhetoricians." There was nothing in common between the two save the divine fire of the soul, and the will to forsake country and kin that they might minister to the peoples on the borders of the encompassing flood, the very edge of the world, "beyond which no man dwells."

Columcille's first education was in the remote highlands of Donegal, a land full of ancient customs and traditions. Under his foster-father, the priest Crimthann, he very early surpassed his own age and class in his studies; he did not, we are told, wish to indulge the vainglory that he should have wisdom or knowledge without rehearsing and studying with the best masters. In Bennchor, the only school of the North, founded by a pupil of Candida Casa, S. Finnén, he had his first classical training, meeting no doubt Picts and Scots not only from Ireland but from Alba. After his ordination at Mag Bile about 541 he studied among the Laigin with Gemman, an aged poet of the druids, from whom he must have learned much of the old Irish traditions and pieties and their nature lore. He went west to the famous school of Aranmore under S. Énna; and thence to Clonard, on the highway of the great passes to Mullingar and Athlone, where another S. Finnén, pupil of S. David of Menevia in Wales, gathered it was said three thousand scholars. There he built his student's bothy and took his turn at grinding the corn for the household supper, a servile task in which according to legend an angel took the place

of the great prince. In the east he joined the thirty students who had gathered round S. Mo Bhí Cláirenach on the banks of the Fin-glas or "fair stream" which flows into the Tolka at Glasnevin, where he stayed till the school was swept away by the plague of 544. There was given to him power and knowledge in Latin and Irish and every tongue, with the fame of a great poet and scribe of the first order. The high-poet Dallán in a eulogy after his death says that Columcille learned Greek grammar.

On Columcille's return from Glasnevin his cousin Áed mac Ainmirech (later king) gave him a king's fort at Derry, the oak-grove (*c.* 546)—an example of the new practice of abandoning the forts of a military Ireland for the more commodious life of an Ireland at peace. Columcille, to the indignation of Áed, proceeded to destroy by fire the former stronghold of "worldly men" —probably the palisade which encompassed a king's house. When the blaze threatened a grove of trees on the old site "he made his hymn to protect the grove"—possibly one of the *nemith* or sacred groves of his people, for it is evident that the druids had a school of learning at Derry. "Though I am affrighted truly," he was said to have sung, "by death and by hell, I am more affrighted frankly by the sound of an axe in Derry in the west." A lane called Longtower marks the site where he built his church. "When he was building the oratory that men call to-day Dubhreiglés, because of the nearness of that ancient grove of his people, he could not find a place to build the oratory in such wise that the front of the altar should be towards the east. And so loth was he to cut down the grove that he bade the side of the oratory be toward the east. In proof hereof the altar where he was wont to say the mass is on the east side." His special care was an old yew in front of his new church. Whatever pagan mysteries the venerable tree had known in the past, to Columcille's eyes the angels of God now descended on it. It was an old poet who had seen the

growth of such a yew out of the deep of the earth who sang of Columcille himself (15) :

> "It was the stock of a true prince,
> A wood of the root of a forest sanctuary."

With his own hands he worked at the new building, carrying his axe to the forest to hew wood—an odious spectacle to the bardic scholars of a prince "stooping to the handle of an axe," by ancient law degraded while he held it to the rank of a vulgar plebeian. According to a later story companies of bards surrounded him in the wood, and on the spot of his shameful toil violently demanded then and there gifts customary from his royal house (16). At their threats to make a satire on him, "and he without anything to give them, exceeding shame seized him, and so great was the shame that those that were there saw smoke rising up from his head, and heavy sweat streaming from his brow." In two successive assaults of bardic groups his impassioned prayers were answered by a miracle which enabled him to give the royal gifts demanded.

From Derry he went to be ordained priest by S. Etchén at Cluain Foda in Farbill. The bishop, brother of Áed mac Ainmire and cousin of Columcille, well matched with him in pride, was at his plough behind the team amid the mocking contempt of his household. "It is wrong of thee," say his folk to Columcille, "to come seeking orders of such a man ; for he is not a bishop but a ploughman." And thus answered Columcille, "Give no judgment upon his outward ways ere ye learn what inward virtues he may have of God." And Columcille spoke to the bishop and told him that he had come to take orders from him. And the bishop gave him no answer, nor did he the more cease his ploughing. Nor for all the efforts of Columcille did he pause "ere it came to the hour that he unyoked each day" ; when he consented to ordain him on the morrow. Columcille returned to the monastery at Derry as abbot. There as

throughout his life his chosen place of prayer to the Lord of the Elements was under the open sky, by the sea, or on a hill where all Nature lay open before him. "It was his wont to go alone from Doire to Carraic Eolairg above the brink of truly fair Loch Foyle, to make orisons to God, because it was beautiful and solitary, and angels came right often to converse with him there."

In Columcille's childhood his own kin, the northern Uí Neill, held the high-kingship. In 534 Muirchertach was succeeded peacefully by Tuathal Maelgarbh, great-grandson of Niall. Once again the old strife for the succession was revived. There was yet another of Niall's great-grandsons, Díarmait mac Cerbhaill of the southern branch, whose father and grandfather had not reigned and whose claim to the succession must be saved now or never. In 544 Tuathal was assassinated by a foster-brother of Díarmait. For twenty-one years (544–565) Díarmait reigned—the last of Niall's great-grandsons of whom we hear. "Neither came there in those times a king that was grander, that was more revered, or that in figure or in face, in wisdom, in speech, in royal rule, was greater than he." His "tribute and discipline and law prevailed in Ireland generally; his stewards and managers, also his regular soldiers in their billets, were throughout Ireland up and down."

The alternate succession was not yet fully established, and there was tension between the groups of the Uí Neill who had to back their claims by force. No doubt resentment lingered between the ruling race of Connacht and the unfilial house of Niall, who in their pride of conquest had cast off their ancestral line, thinly disguising their descent from the Connachta by using the corresponding term Dál Cuinn. Moreover the high-king Díarmait had the traditional wars with the southern Laigin over the debatable tracts of the middle land. Throughout these feuds Columcille held steadily to the principle of constitutional rule under the elected high-king Díarmait, to him the king "ordained by God" (17).

In 551 he founded his second monastery in the southern borders of the Uí Neill ascendancy, on a site given him by the local prince of Fir Cell, Aed, son of the king of Tethba. It lay on the highway from Tara to Clonmacnois, midway between Clonard and Birr. In Tethba where he was ordained priest there was open fighting. If he crossed the Shannon he passed into hostile country; his friend S. Brénainn of Clonfert was under Connacht rule. Like Derry, the "oak-grove" in the north, Durrow, the "oak-field" in the south, was a centre of his lifelong mission of peace.

The new monastery was the remote cause of a famous dispute between Columcille and Díarmait. It seems that a manuscript had been brought from Rome by his old master S. Finnén—the latest achievement of the new learning, a translation by S. Jerome of the Gospels now known as "the Vulgate" which was presently to supersede the "Old Latin" version. In his fervid zeal as apostle and scholar Columcille borrowed the manuscript and secretly copied it through many nights, probably for Durrow. When Finnén brought his grievance to the king's high-court, Díarmait awarded the copy to the owner of the manuscript. "It is a wrong judgment," said Columcille in his wrath, "and you shall be punished for it." The tradition of his passionate temper and generous submission is preserved in an old story of the visit of the holy presbyter Fráech. "It is not I that am to blame therefor," saith Columcille, "but the wrong judgment of Díarmait son of Cerbhall against me." "It were more easy for a cleric to submit to a wrong judgment than to set about defending himself," saith Fráech. "When a man's wrath is up and he is sore tried he cannot submit," saith Columcille. "It is right to stifle wrath," saith Fráech, "lest it make matter for regret." "Though a man do much ill through anger," saith Columcille, "yet will God pardon him therefor if he do penance." "It were better," saith Fráech, "to shun evil than to seek forgiveness therefor." "O Cruimtheir Fráech,

wit thou well," saith Columcille, "that in the world is none that shall sooner reach Heaven than the sinner that repenteth. And there hath never been nor ever will be done a worse deed than did Longinus," saith he, "and it was forgiven him by reason of his repentance." "If it be so," said Fraech, "may God make us good men both together." "Amen," saith Columcille. Anon they sealed friendship and fellowship, and each bade other farewell. Columcille apparently got back his copy and Finnén's friendship was not broken. "Do you not see," said Finnén later, when Columcille visited his old master from Candida Casa, "do you not see Columcille coming towards us and the angels of God accompanying him?"

Further troubles arose from the contending passions of that time of change and resettlement. At a Tara festival a quarrel arose between boys at a hurling match, and Curnán son of the Connacht king and hostage at the court struck another on the head with his club so that he died straightway. The boy fled to the guard of Columcille. King Díarmait bade him be dragged from his arms and put to death, according to the law that there could be no possible remission of the death sentence for disturbance of the truce of Tara during the festival. Legends told of Columcille's defiant threats of vengeance, of Díarmait's retorts, of angels who miraculously carried the northern prince safely from Tara through the midst of Slíab Breg. The only facts we know are that there had been a confederation between the kings of In Fochla and of Connacht, whose forces were apparently about to unite when Díarmait took the offensive and marched to intercept them near Drumcliff, on the military road north from Sligo between sea and mountain. After the battle of Cúil Dremne Díarmait returned to Tara to rule and fight as before for another four years. But the northern bards, faithful to their patrons, left to later generations their tales framed on the heroic model: of how Díarmait had brought the vengeful S. Finnén to demand from Heaven

victory over Columcille, and for greater assurance had brought with him also druids (18) and their incantations, and how this bitter Christian magician and the pagan trash were defeated by the imperious Columcille alone, standing behind the northern host with arms extended in *crossfhigill ;* so that he compelled even the archangel Michael to execute an inhuman slaughter on his foes—an outrage for which the indignant Michael condemned him to perpetual banishment from Ireland. In fact, however, Columcille suffered no banishment. Two years passed before he went of his own will to Iona, and he often returned to Ireland. His most bitter malediction was that laid on a prince of the Ulaid for the impious slaying in 565 of Díarmait, a king, as he said, " ordained by God."

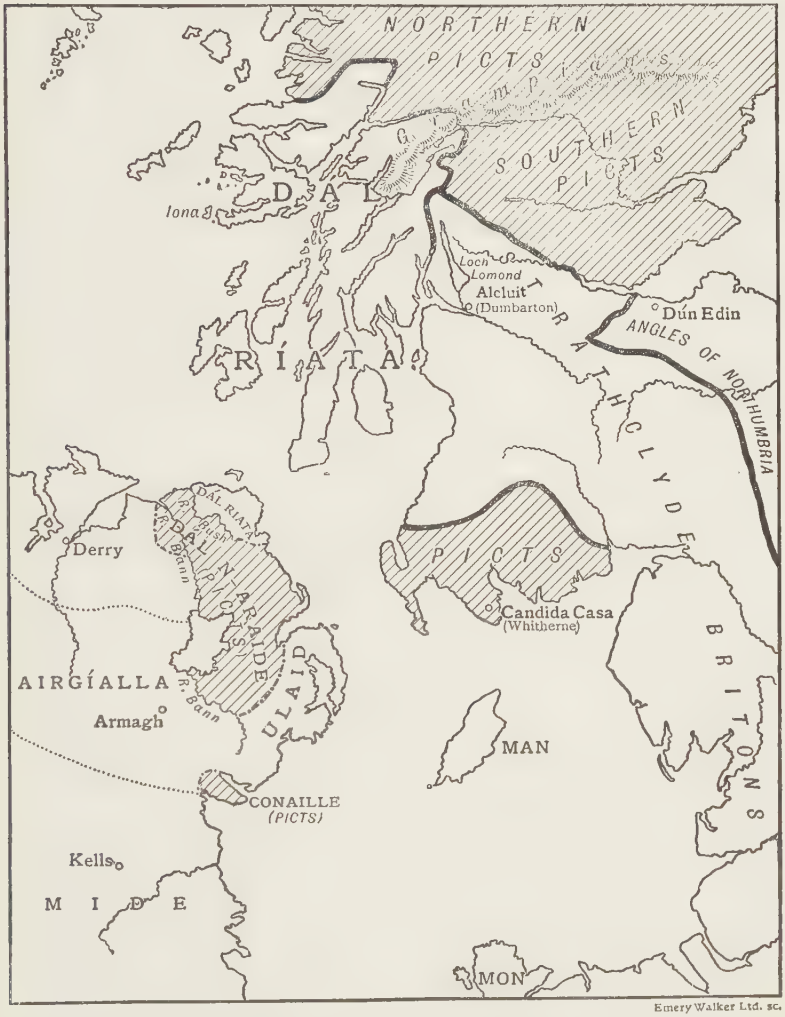
After Díarmait, the last of Niall's grandsons of whom we hear, the high-kingship fell back to the northern Uí Neill for the next hundred years, and during Columcille's life it was held by his own immediate kindred of Conall Gulban. The fantastic mediæval story of " the cursing of Tara " (19), impossible in every date and name, must be wholly set aside. In the tale the arrogance of Díarmait was met by the more furious arrogance of S. Ruadán who called to him Ireland's " twelve apostles " to " fast upon " the king, chanting psalms of malediction, while Díarmait and his clergy made in return their denunciatory fast. The controversy of a year ended in a cursing scene of equal malevolence on both sides. " Upon the royal hearth Ruadán imprecated the ' blackness of darkness.' ' Alas for him that to the clergy of the churches sheweth fight,' said the exasperated king : ' evil is that ye have worked, clerics, my kingdom's ruination.' " In fact, however, Tara was neither cursed nor deserted. Díarmait's son, Áed Sláne, shared the high-kingship with Colmán, king of the northern Uí Neill, and the chronicle says expressly that " they ruled Tara in equal power." In the year 780 an ecclesiastical synod was held " in the town of Tara " (*in oppido Temhra*). Possibly the cursing

tale may have been invented in an effort to explain a change in Irish life felt not only in "Tara of Brega, home of the warrior bands," but in Crúachu of the Connachta, and in Ailenn of the Laigin. It was fighting kings with strong permanent armies at their command who had maintained these strongholds. But when with the growth of peace and the influence of Christianity captives held for slavery or ransom, the most profitable booty of raiders and plunderers, failed, when buccaneering adventures no longer supported professional soldiers, mercenary armies died out never to reappear until the introduction in the thirteenth century of the galloglass against Norman invaders. Without the hired captains and their trained bands kings could no longer keep their threatening military pomp, and Tara along with other chief forts lost alike their use and their glory. We shall see also how after Díarmait's time kings of Tara had special reasons for caution in the occupation of their Hill.

The change that was passing over the great military centres may be indicated in the tale of the "Settling of Tara" (20). It relates how in Díarmait's time the nobles of Ireland murmured at the extent of the royal domain of Tara and refused to attend the king's festival until the true limits were defined, "for they deemed it unprofitable to have so much land without house or cultivation upon it, and of no service to the hearth of Tara"; of how Fintan, the sage preserved from the Deluge, was summoned to give judgment; and the history and chronicles of Ireland were recounted to decide the true manner of the partition. All rose up before Fintan in the banqueting-house: "O Fintan," said they, "we are the better of thy coming to relate the story of Ireland." So "Fintan ended his life and his age." "The place in which he was buried is uncertain, however."

It was about 563 when Columcille, then forty-two years old, made the supreme spiritual sacrifice, forsaking his own land "for the love of Christ" and "to preach the word of God." The day of his sailing remained to his

own people a day of destiny and woe—a forecast, as it were, of the dispersion of the sons of Ireland. The wailing



of birds and senseless creatures along Loch Foyle was to him as clear as speech of men; and so great was his love for his land and the place of his birth that no greater

was his sorrow in parting from human folk than in parting from the sea-gulls and birds of lough Foyle. "The sound of it will not go from my ears till death," said Columcille. And the holy Odhrán in the boat made answer, "Be silent and heed them not, and set thy mind on Him for whose sake thou hast given them up, to wit Almighty God." He landed at the little rock-island of Iona, barely three miles at its utmost length, and nowhere more than a mile and a half broad. "It is well for us that our roots should pass into the earth here," said Columcille.

His choice of a site showed the hereditary genius of Cormac the Wise and Niall of the Nine Hostages. Iona lay on the frontiers of races and religions. From Caithness to the Forth was the kingdom of the Picts, who after the retreat of the Romans from the Great Wall had overpowered the old British population, already weakened by Roman domination: behind their mountain barriers the Picts remained wholly heathen. To the east Columcille already saw the rise of a new Irish kingdom. In Cormac's time Irish settlers had begun to cross the narrow seas, and in 470 Fergus mac Eirc and his brothers went out from Dál Ríata to join the older settlers; where Fergus became king, ruling over the two kingdoms of Dál Ríata, one in Ireland and one in Alba. Argyle, the "borderland of the Gael," is properly the name of a small part only of the peninsula occupied by the Scots, distinct from Lorne (Loarn), Cowall (Congall), Knapdale, and Cantire (Cenn Tíre)—a territory consisting for the most part of small pockets of people separated by ten or twenty miles of mountain, moorland, or sea—angry seas, and roads narrow and precipitous as they skirt the mountains or lie open to the storms of the moor. Descendants of the Irish settlers, known by the genealogists as *Fir Alban*, spread over the forty-two neighbouring islands. To the south the Britons held the land from the Clyde to the Solway, save for an isolated group of Picts in a corner of Galloway. They were in two groups—the *Romani* who had been dominated by Rome and accepted its civilization,

and those who had remained outside Roman power, holding then and for centuries after the fortress of Alcluit (Dumbarton) in the Clyde.

With the departure of the Romans the old inhabitants turned to the Scots for their laws and customs. S. Ninnian had carried Christianity from the Solway to the Clyde, but even in Patrick's time the people, denounced as apostate barbarians, were Christian in little more than name, and over them Columcille gained a special power. From the Firth of Forth to the Tweed, along the eastern coast, the country now comprised in the Lothians and Berwickshire was occupied by the Angles. The changing borders that divided these four nations, Scots, Picts, Angles, and Britons, speaking four distinct languages, were regions of war, and the hard conditions of the time left their mark on the Scot kingdom. In Ireland local rule was strong. In Scotland there is only a single mention of an under-king—" the king of Cenn Tíre," and all power lay in the hands of the line of Fergus.

When Columcille landed at Iona king Conall, great-grandson of Fergus (succeeding his uncle Gabrán in 560 A.D.) ruled over his two kingdoms, living in his larger territory in Alba, and taking little interest in the Irish Dál Ríata. Hard-pressed by the Picts, from whom he suffered a heavy defeat in 560, Conall was now fighting for command of the islands of the coast; his hold there was so precarious that Columcille sought a double grant of Iona, not only from Conall but from Brude king of the Picts, whom he visited in 563 at his strong fort near Inverness, Craig-Phadraig. Met by the hostile druids he overwhelmed their pagan incantations with the thunder of his voice as he chanted : " O send forth Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me ; " and the bolts fell from the fortress gates. King Brude accepted his teaching; and by extraordinary labours in terrible journeys by sea and mountain, forest and fen, Columcille established his mission among the heathen. The Scot kings on their side accepted him as religious and political adviser;

Conall's successor Áedán was confirmed or inaugurated in the kingship by him at Iona. Columcille still directed the monasteries attached to him in Ireland; and stories told of him in Brega, in the old Mide about Uisnech, beyond the Shannon at Loch Cé and Kilmore, and of his friendly relations with the kings of Osraige, prove his frequent visits to his own country.

From his rock-island he ruled with unrivalled authority over his confederation of Christian settlements from Durrow to Inverness. Trading vessels brought news of the outer world, even from far Italy. Wandering princes sought refuge from their political troubles. There were many visitors from Ireland. There were explorers of seas beyond the "bounds set to human enterprise," their skin-covered coracles buffeted by tempestuous waves, or half submerged by "a whale raising himself like a mountain, his huge open mouth bristling with bone." Among Columcille's friends were Cormac, who took the terrible voyage to the Orkneys in his "leathern" boat, and one of his own kindred, Áedán son of Gabrán, king of Dál Ríata, who had also led an expedition to the Orkneys in 580. Another friend and visitor, Brénainn the Navigator, was said to have adopted a great reform in boat-building. According to legend Brénainn's foster-mother rebuked him: "For the country which thou art seeking from God, ye will never find it on these dead soft skins, for it is a holy consecrated land and no blood of man was ever shed in it; but let timber boats be made by thee. Belike thou wilt find that land on this wise." So Brénainn went into Connacht and an excellent large boat was made by him. His earlier voyages had been in three boats with thirty men in each. The timber boat travelled alone and carried sixty men.

Iona and its neighbouring islands with their dependent missionary settlements, became in a world of war the common shelter of those who sought succour and consolation, Irish, Picts, Scots, Britons, Saxons—the centre of national and international peace. The dominant figure

of this great movement, religious and political, Columcille himself, was the perpetual marvel of the monastery. Memories treasured by the monks, partly written and partly oral, were gathered together by Adamnan, who was born only twenty-seven years after his death, and must have heard the tales of men who knew him well: his biography has no parallel in Europe in mediæval times. Conventional miracles fall away before an astounding personality. At Iona as at Derry he was accustomed "to make orisons to God" under the open sky, on a hill or rock commanding a horizon of sea and land, "because it was beautiful and solitary." His converse with nature was to his followers miraculous. He knew every shifting wind, the changes of the clouds, the trick of the tides on each coast; he perceived the intent of the sea reptiles, of the animals of the land, of the singing of birds; he had power over "the dumb creatures of the earth, trees and stones." The story is well known of his calling one of the brethren at Iona to warn him that a crane beaten with the storm would fall exhausted on the beach, where he was to take it up tenderly and nurse it with care for three days when it would fly again to its home in Ireland, "because it comes from my own native place." To those able to receive it he could give knowledge of the place of the sun and moon, and of the higher elements, and of every virtue they possess of God. A disciple who questioned him as to his mysterious knowledge of far-off things made near could only learn that to a very few it was given in contemplation by divine grace, the mind being miraculously opened, to behold even the whole compass of the heavens and the earth, as though illuminated by one ray of the sun, laid open to sight.

The union of mental powers with astonishing physical faculties of eye and ear and voice gave him the authority of a seer from whose supernatural vision nothing was hid. He read the ways and hearts of men—the crafty disguise of the extortioner, the hidden virtue of the lowly in heart, the over-righteousness of the mock penitent.

He detected the sea robber, alone in his tiny boat, hiding in the sand-mounds by day under a covering of hay, and creeping stealthily at night to kill the young seals. For the hunger-driven wretch he had a sheep slain that he might not return empty, and seeing him near death sent after him a fat sheep and bushels of corn. On the other hand, to the scandal of modern writers, he was seen snatching up his robe and rushing knee deep into the sea to pour out tempestuous anathemas against a robber of cows: for the raider was no starving man but of his own kin, prince and degrader of the royal house of Dál Ríata, and for a third time scoffing plunderer of the island. As the saint sat with his manuscript in the door of his little hut he recognized a bungler in the traveller crying out for a ferry-boat to take him across the sea. "The man who is shouting beyond the strait is not of very sharp wit," said he, "he will spill my ink"—which indeed befell when the stranger eagerly stooping to kiss him overturned the inkpot with the hem of his garment.

Columcille's ironic humour, his deep and never-failing compassion, his fury at those who disgraced noble birth and high obligations, all have their place in the story; and no less his joy in austerity, and the proud and passionate soul bowed to the law of humility and the fellowship of lowly duties. His bothy of twined branches was set on a rocky grass-grown hummock, where as he sat at the open door incessantly writing the sacred books for his churches he could see every event of the day—the shouting for a ferry, the birds driven before the approaching storm, the boats bearing the sick, the labourers over-late and wearied at their work. We see him on the one hand using a relentless spiritual discipline, and on the other confounding his disciples by a comprehension reaching beyond their view of the trials and the generosities of common human nature. He was less remembered in the monks' stories for his severity than for his care for them when their toil was late and heavy, and for the passion of his tears with the contrite sinner.

If he troubled the monks it was by a tolerance beyond their understanding. He was not utterly remote from the heathen. His cousin the high-king Muirchertach mac Erca was probably a pagan, and so was Muirchertach's grandson Mael Umai, the last leader of the *fiana* in Ireland. He knew the ancient tradition of Irish learned men going for instruction to Alba, the farthest native home of the druids when Roman armies had driven them from Gaul. Called one day to a dying Pict, he hastened before the messengers "as one that knew well the way." "And he was baptized and right so he died and was borne by angels to heaven." What good service had this pagan done, grumbled the bystanders, that he should be so quickly saved? "Columcille answered that he had kept a virtue natural, inasmuch as he had not done to any that he would mislike him to be done to him;" and the dead man was buried in the ancient fashion by his comrades with a cairn over his grave. So also it was with a decrepit old chief brought to him on the prow of a boat in Skye—"blameless throughout life," said Columcille—who being baptized died on the same spot, and was laid under a cairn on the sea-coast after the manner of his people.

Two years after Columcille had gone to Iona, in 565, the Irish sovereignty fell back to the northern Uí Neill for the next hundred years; and was held for Columcille's life by his own immediate kindred. His cousin the high-king Áed mac Ainmirech—distinguished like Columcille by the acuteness of his hearing, the power of his voice, the hilarity expressed in his lively face—held soon after his accession a great Assembly at Druim Ceatt, a hill near the Foyle not far from Limavady (574–575). Here he "abode four months and a year encamped with a great gathering of the men of Erin, both laymen and clerics, making laws and dealing justice among them." To this convention Columcille was called by the voice of the people: "sorrow and exceeding longing seized the men of Erin for him."

An old story of the Convention of Druim Ceatt gives a picture of how these great meetings were assembled and sheltered. " The last three who reached it after everyone else were the three great Colmáns of Meath, and dark was the night when they arrived. And hence there was no material for a fire or for a hut for them. Then that news was brought to Columcille, and a welcome was sent to them from him, and a call was made on the holy men of Ireland, even a log from each fire and a rod and a wisp from each hut for the three great Colmáns of Meath. In that wise then those things were brought to them. Then on the morrow the saints of Ireland asked of Columcille : ' What manner of clerics are the three Colmáns for whom thou hast solicited us last night ? ' " On hearing his report " every one of the saints of Ireland thought little of his own strength in comparison of that testimony which Columcille had given them." The " three Colmáns " were in fact of the next generation to Columcille and could not have been present : but the description must have been familiar to common knowledge of the usual customs at assemblies for the king's *airecht* or for festivals, in the erection of booths and provision of food and fire (21).

The proceedings at Druim Ceatt demonstrate that in ancient Ireland public justice and legislation for the common weal could only be carried out by the general Assembly of freemen and nobles legally qualified. Columcille was concerned in three problems. The first illustrates the maintenance of law even if it were against the high-king himself. Scannlán prince of Osraige was held hostage by Áed mac Ainmirech, and Columcille was guarantor for his release at a fixed time. On Columcille's demand the high-court decided that he should be set free, and the king accepted the verdict. Scannlán when he became king of Osraige ordered a perpetual tribute of gratitude to Durrow. It is probable that the stories of Scannlán's imprisonment and starvation were later embellishments to the tale.

The second question referred to a political problem new in Irish history—the position of the king of Dál Ríata, bearing the same title in two realms—one in Ireland, the other in the kingdom across the sea in Alba where he lived. What was the status of the Irish Dál Ríata? In case of war to whom did it owe allegiance and tribute—to the Irish *ardrí*, or to its own king even though he lived in a new realm beyond the ocean? And what was the position of the king himself across the sea? "For the men of Alba were saying that to them belonged the kingdom which they had made: and that had been a cause of strife and battle between them." In 574 Áedán, cousin of Conall and the new king of Alba, had gone to Iona to be there consecrated or confirmed in his kingdom by Columcille. At the very outset of his reign he was threatened with war by the high-king of Ireland, and with Columcille he came to Druim Ceatt to ask for a truce or peace, so "that the King of Erin should not go against him and destroy him." The question was of the utmost importance to both sides, for the king of Dál Ríata in Alba had of necessity a strong fleet for those days.

Columcille, cousin to the high-king Áed, and chief counsellor to Áedán, refused to decide himself the question of tribute and hosting from Dál Ríata, and named as the judge appointed by destiny the most distinguished Brehon, Colmán. Colmán's decision was that the Irish Dál Ríata should give to the king of Ireland rent and tribute and land forces in time of war; and should serve the oversea king in Alba with ships (22), and in certain conditions should allow a fixed compensation and aid to his men, "as they were of one stock." With regard to the Alban kingdom Columcille's object was above all then and ever to avert the disaster of war between Irish states. He laid on Áedán his most stringent injunction never under any circumstances to make war on the high-king of Ireland. By his statesmanship peace at the time was maintained. In its precarious position the Scot

realm in Alba, now secure from the west, was fortified to maintain its independence against its formidable neighbours, Picts to the north, and Angles of Bernicia to the east. Its Scot dynasty held their title from the Irish Dál Ríata till the Norse invasions in 792. The title changed, but the dynasty continued. Sixty Irish kings, from Fergus to the death of Alexander III in 1286, reigned in Alba during some eight centuries and left to northern Britain the name of "Scot-land."

The third question for Columcille concerned the culture and tradition of the whole people of Ireland. "The men of Erin were in point to banish the poets by reason of their multitude and their sharpness and their complaining, and for their evil words. And moreover because they had made satires against Áed King of Erin." The contention indeed was not so simple as this. It was as complex as every controversy must be when men are torn by contending religions, changing forms of society, disputes of new and old learning, and when all these forces combine in the fray. The clergy feared pagan influences lurking in the old heroic tales, in ancient charms and incantations, in the nature philosophy of druidic teaching. To ardent reformers, enthusiasts for the new world, the teachers of the old learning represented traditions of a pagan and barbarous age, the "black laws of the heathen" (23). Modern scholars desired to establish Latin writing on parchment, and put an end to the ogham alphabet of straight lines cut on stone or wood—a writing in which no literature in the modern sense could exist. All alike called in religion to their aid. The question involved the whole traditional life and history of the Irish people, the very foundations of their national existence.

In Gaul the organization of the druids had been the central bond of a multitude of separate states, giving to all a common law and tradition, and enforcing a common justice. So formidable were they as the centre of national consciousness that the first Roman emperors exterminated

the whole caste, driving them into forests and dens and caves of the earth. In Ireland they still survived four hundred years after their ruin on the continent, as augurs, doctors, priests, philosophers, arbitrators in war. When after Patrick's time the influence of the druids declined the *filid*, also trained in the ancient oral tradition, took their place in the king's court. They lived by their art, expecting a fixed price for each poem—cattle, horses, hounds, golden cups and chains, mantles, brooches, and the like—and distributing praise or blame, lofty satires, vicious lampoons, carrying genuine terror to the people by the power of their curse.

While Patrick forbade any divination which could even by gesture recall the ceremonial of ancient sacrifice "to the devil," divination or prophesying by improvising and chanting a quatrain without any pagan symbol was not held ungodly. Side by side however with this permitted divination, remnants of pagan ceremony persisted for at least five hundred years. There survived also for centuries prehistoric traditions whose origin is lost, of harmless acts held lucky or unlucky for kings and notable people; in 1024 a scribe, while as a good Irishman chronicling these, added his religious warning against superstition: "Practise charity for the sake of the dear God, it is enough of luck for any man" (24).

There was a further trouble as to written signs. The only writing used by the Irish was the ogham script based on the Roman alphabet, and engraved in straight lines on stone or wood; it is known to us in funeral inscriptions, none earlier than 400 A.D., and some as late as 600 A.D.; and in charms and spells of which a few remain. When Latin writing on parchment or paper was brought in with Christianity ogham was condemned as pagan and dangerous. Inscriptions on stones in pre-Christian cemeteries were defaced, no doubt as bearing names of the old gods: if pagan charms against sickness and calamity were given in this script all possible traces of them were blotted out. The very characters were

looked upon as anti-Christian, and their use punished by excommunication. Never does any Irish Latinist mention the old ogham script, in spite of the keen national interest they showed in every other matter of archaic interest. To the pious Christian ogham was a pagan and superstitious custom; to learned men it was a "barbarous" form of writing without classic tradition and even less future opportunity. By both it was condemned. Clergy and scholars alike called to their aid the sanction of religion, and feeling ran so high that just as the Roman road in Northumberland was known as the "devil's causeway," so Irish oghams became the "language of the devil." "Writing Irish" presently came to mean carving in ogham characters even if the words were Latin: "writing Latin" meant writing with pen and ink even if the words were Irish. In this sense Irish was said to be "a profane language," and "he who reads Irish is unruly in the sight of God."

In so entangled a controversy, with the old world and the new in conflict, Columcille took the lead as cleric, scholar, and leader of his people. He was known as a friend of the *filid*. He had studied under Gemman, a druid poet. It was notorious that in his journeys he had never met a bard on the road without asking him to sing the ancient lays. His former pupil, "the little blind man," Dallán Forgaill, was a high-poet of the druidic order, probably of the older race. There can be no doubt that Columcille recognized the national importance of this powerful central corporation, guardians of ancient tradition, by which the petty states were united in obedience to a common traditional law. It is evident that he did not look on the bardic order as upholders of paganism: the incidents in the assembly would in fact indicate that even the bardic poets as a body were by this time professing Christians.

In the matter of the poets Columcille demanded that he himself should pronounce judgment. The discussion was long and harsh. "It is this, the judgment that I

give, that the poets be kept in Erin," saith Columcille. "It is no easy thing to keep them," saith the king, "for they are much folk and numerous, and it is hard to serve them owing to the multitude of their unjust demands." "Say not so," saith Columcille, "for lasting and enduring will be the praises they will make for thee, even as the praises they made for Cormac mac Airt, meic Cuinn; for the praises endure, and the treasure and riches that are given for them perish." He met the king's complaint that the poets were an intolerable burden on the public by reorganizing the whole body under Dallán, limiting their numbers, and making rules for their order: from the old story of Dallán's death some years later it appears that one of the rules was to forbid their abuse of comminatory satire:

> "Thus the poets were delivered
> Through Colum the gentle law-giver,
> For each tuath a poet. Not heavy
> Was this that Colum ordained them."

His answer to the clerics and scholars was probably given by his rules against "Irish" writing and pagan teaching:

> "I shall take their sting from poems
> In Druim Ceatt of the Assemblies;
> I shall set the minds of poets
> Saying goodness in one fashion."

The discussion closed in a scene of intense excitement. "When Columcille had given judgment between them and the men of Erin, each poet of them and each professor made a poem in praise of Columcille. And when he heard all the poets praising him in unison there came upon him such an elation of mind and heart that the air above him was filled with evil spirits. And this was revealed to a certain holy man of his fellowship called Baíthín, and he rebuked Columcille sharply, and said it was more fitting for him to give heed to the judgment of God than to worldly praise. And he told him that the air above him was filled with demons. Then Columcille covered his head and wept sore. And he had sharp

sorrow for his sin." As high-poet of Erin Dallán Forgaill was finally invited by the whole Assembly to make a poem in honour of the protector of the learned; the "Amhra Columcille" in the old bardic style was written after Columcille's death, and the scholia on it tell the details of the Assembly. The Convention is barely mentioned in the Annals, and it is to the gratitude of the bardic order to Columcille that we owe our knowledge of this assembly of the Irish in a crisis of their history.

The wisdom and charity of Columcille were justified. It was his powerful influence that made a way for the preservation of old historic tales and religious traditions of pagan times. In the next century the druids adopted Latin learning and writing. But they carried with them into the schools a mass of ancient tradition and oral lore which they wrought into the new literature. Henceforth the Irish monks were free to be profoundly interested in the history of their country, the tradition of their people, the grammar of their "choice language," as they called the native tongue. Irish learning and Latin learning throve side by side. Piety was not dimmed. But a literature was created unlike that of any other country in Europe—a literature that was the expression of the mind of Ireland rooted in the past and open to the new world. Columcille was the strong protector and guide of the national spirit, and its glory.

For thirty-two years after the Convention of Druim Ceatt Columcille continued his mission work and ruled over his ever-widening "familia," with its background in the Pictish lands by the northern ocean, and stretching to Durrow. So vast a monastic system had no parallel in the rest of the Celtic world. It was a creation of the Irish instinct for ordered local government in a confederated commonwealth. We cannot now say whether it was through the dominant influence of Columcille that the word "abbot" came to mean among the Irish all high authority, temporal and spiritual. Here a poet might call Astyages, king of the Medes, "abbot." The pope

Silvester was described as "abbot of Rome," Gregory the Great as "abbot of Rome and of the whole of Latium"; Christ himself was spoken of as "the great abbot" whose was "the abbacy and kingdom of the celestial city."

The large statesmanship of Columcille, his lofty genius, the passionate and poetic temperament that filled men with awe and reverence, the stately figure and splendid voice that seemed almost miraculous gifts, the power of inspiring love that brought dying men to see his face once more before they fell at his feet in death, gave a surpassing dignity and beauty to his life. "He could never spend the space of even one hour without study or prayer or writing, or some other holy occupation . . . and still in all those he was loved by all." But even his astonishing frame was at last worn out by excessive austerities. "Know," said the Irish proverb, "that there are three sods that nobody may shun: the sod of his birth, the sod of his death, and the sod of his burial." One day, then seventy-six years old, he was borne to see his monks labouring in the field, and to view the two heaps of grain in the barn, their food for the coming year. "Now," he said, "My Lord Jesus deigns to invite me, to whom I say at the middle of the night on His own invitation I shall pass over." Coming from the barn, as he sat by the brink of the road the white horse that used to carry the milk placed his head in his bosom and "begins to lament and abundantly to pour forth tears, like a human being, into the saint's lap, and with a beslavered mouth to make moan. Which when the servant saw, he proceeds to drive away the tearful mourner, but the Saint stopped him saying, 'Allow him, allow him who loves me to pour his flood of bitterest tears into my bosom. . . . To this brute and irrational animal the Creator Himself, in His own way, has clearly revealed that his master is about to depart from him.' And saying this he blessed the sorrowful horse." Ascending the small hill where he was used to pray he lifted his hands

there for the last time and blessed his community. Till vespers he sat in his cell writing a copy of the Psalms, and when his office was finished he lay on his bed, a bare flag, and for pillow a stone. At the turn of midnight when the matins bell was struck, hastening more quickly than the others he knelt by the altar, and there his servants groping in the dark found him lying. As the monks' lanterns were brought in he, "with eyes upraised, looked round on each side, as though beholding the holy angels coming to meet him." He moved his hand to bless the brethren, and so breathed forth his life.

Columcille's work was carried on at the very "edge of the world," on the mountain barriers that held back the flood of the Atlantic, beyond whose storms Imperial Rome had never reached. According to Adamnan his name was famous throughout Ireland, in all Britain, and the islands of the Atlantic, in Gaul, in Spain, and beyond the Apennines in Rome, "the chief of all cities." It is vain to speculate what his influence might have been if the chances of the world had thrown a prince of so gifted a race, with his great political and spiritual endowments, into the centre of the continental struggle for the reconstruction of a shattered civilization. We can only judge of what he accomplished in remote and despised islands with the materials that lay to his hand. Through all calamities his monastery on the rock of Iona continued, under forty-nine successive abbots, till the death of Gilla Críst in 1202. The true monument of his greatness was indeed the company of monks whom he had inspired to carry on the tradition he bequeathed to them. Never perhaps did a founder, save S. Francis, so profoundly impress his spirit on his followers. In England a heathen land lay before them, for the Roman missionaries established in the year of Columcille's death by Augustine in Canterbury, speaking no English and hating "barbarism," made little progress, and after some reverses were practically confined to Kent. There was no mission from the British Christians, for according to Bede "it

was the custom of the Britons not to pay any respect to the custom and religion of the English, nor to correspond with them any more than with pagans" (25). For the great mass of the English there was only one source of Christian teaching—Columcille's monks. King Oswald of Northumbria, once a refugee in Iona and a convert there, saw in the night before his battle of the Hevenfeld by the Roman Wall the lofty form of Columcille, and with his own hands set up a cross of wood as his victorious standard. The Columban monks made a second Iona at Lindisfarne, with its church of hewn oak thatched with reeds "after the fashion of the Scots"; and Áedán, sent from Iona as the first missionary-bishop to Lindisfarne, was the true apostle of Christianity to England (26). Irish missionaries taught the English writing, and gave them the letters which were used among them till the Norman Conquest. They travelled on foot over middle England and along the eastern coast,* and even touched the Channel in Sussex, where the wandering missionary journeyed pushing before him his old mother in a little cart. Two monasteries were founded by the Irish in south England, one at Bosham in Sussex, and the famous school of Malmesbury by Maeldub, the teacher of S. Aldhelm. In 662 there was only one bishop in the whole of England who was not of Irish consecration, and this bishop, Agilberct of Wessex, was a Frenchman who had been trained for years in Ireland. Fleets of ships bore students and pilgrims to Ireland for divine studies. The Irish "most willingly" received them all, supplying

* When the abbey of Crowland was repaired in the nineteenth century it was found that an old shrine rested on pillars whose foundations had been built in with stones inscribed and carved by Irish artists. The broken fragments, relics of the ancient Irish mission to England, were left in the foundations by the restorers, and the memory of them was preserved only by an old French pastor there, who handed on the tradition to a pious Irish visitor. Similar traces of old Irish work in the foundations at Durham, and in the Irish stones discovered at Chester, show what interesting results might be obtained by careful examination of other old Christian sites throughout England.

without charge books and food and teaching, welcoming them in every school from Derry to Lismore, making for them a "Saxon quarter" in the school of Armagh. Under their influence racial bitterness was checked, and a new intercourse sprang up between English, Picts, Britons, and Scots. For a moment it seemed as though the British islands were to be drawn into one high confederation and communion with a common worship bounded only by the ocean. The peace of Columcille, the fellowship of learning and piety, rested on the peoples.

For two hundred years the body of Columcille lay in Iona. During the ravages of the Danes the relics were carried (*c.* 850) to the refuge of Dunkeld, which Kenneth Mac Alpine had made the political capital of the old Scot kingdom of Dál Ríata. As raids increased they were hurried from one shelter to another, and oversea to his own country. According to tradition they were laid in the holy place of Downpatrick:

> "His grace in Iona without blame,
> And his soul in Derry,
> And his dear body under the flagstone
> Under which are Brigit and Padraic,"

—until new invaders in the twelfth century carried remains so dangerous again across sea to England. We may remember that in the fourteenth century the church of Durham, in the borderland to which the early monks of Iona first brought the Christian faith, claimed to possess some of the saint's bones and relics (27).

The memory of Columcille did not perish in his unknown grave. In pious recollection poems supposed to represent his intellectual and spiritual renown were attributed to him, ever faithful to the living tradition of his lofty fidelity to his own country:

> "To the Gaels myself,
> To the Gaels my honour,
> To the Gaels my learning,
> To the men of Erin my glory" (28).

Or again :

" Gael ! Gael ! Beloved name,
My one joy of memory is to utter it."

REFERENCES, CHAPTER VIII.

(1) P. 123. For the early Christianity consult Dom Louis Gougaud : " Les Chrétientés Celtiques."
(2) P. 124. Stokes : " Lives of the Saints, from the Book of Lismore," p. 209.
(3) P. 124. The most important work on the study of these relations is " Ireland and Wales : Their Historical and Literary Relations," by Cecile O'Rahilly. See also MacNeill : " Phases of Irish History," pp. 155–156.
(4) P. 125. " Annals of Ulster," I, p. 317, note 16.
(5) P. 125. Petrie : " Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language," II, p. 21.
(6) P. 127. Reeves : " Adamnan's Life of S. Columba," p. xlii ; also " Silva Gadelica," II, 439.
(7) P. 128. Gougaud : " Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 102.
(8) P. 129. See also Kuno Meyer : " Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 100.
(9) P. 129. " King and Hermit : an Irish Poem of the Tenth Century," translated and edited by Kuno Meyer. (London : David Nutt, 1901.)
(10) P. 129. See *Eriu*, I, p. 227.
(11) P. 130. S. Fursa's prayer—" The right hand of God on my shoulder "—recalls the " right hand of God " found on Irish crosses, as at Monasterboice, the open hand upholding the cross.
(12) P. 130. *Eriu*, II, p. 55.
(13) P. 131. Kuno Meyer : " Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 100.
(14) P. 131. For Columcille see " Adamnan's Life of S. Columba," Ed. Reeves, of which there is an English translation, and Manus O'Donnell's " Life of Columcille " (1532), edited O'Kelleher and Schoepperle.
(15) P. 135. Kuno Meyer : " Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century," p. 19.
(16) P. 135. When a man was requested to perform something impossible for the purpose of exposing him to ridicule or disgrace, he was entitled by the Brehon law to demand a fine or reparation equal to one-seventh part of his legal honour-price. See " Cormac's Glossary," 9, 10.
(17) P. 136. Reeves : " Adamnan," p. 68, line 1. See also p. 197, line 5 and note.
(18) P. 139. For Columcille and Díarmait's druid see O'Donnell's " Life of Columcille," p. 127.

(19) P. 139. "Book of Rights," p. 53; Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 234–5. For the fantastic story see "Silva Gadelica," II, 72 *seq.*

(20) P. 140. *Eriu*, IV, p. 125.

(21) P. 148. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman," pp. 55, 81. (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII.)

(22) P. 149. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 198; Reeves: "Adamnan," p. 92, note *c*.

(23) P. 150. Stokes: "Tripartite Life of Patrick," p. ci. For the "sin of druidism" see Gougaud, "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 24.

(24) P. 151. "Book of Rights," p. 25.

(25) P. 157. Haddon and Stubbs, "Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland," I, p. 154. Not one Cumbrian, Welsh, or Cornish missionary to any non-Celtic nation is mentioned anywhere. The same remark applies to the Armorican Britons. Gaulish missionaries neglected preaching to the Saxons in Britain. "We are informed," wrote the Pope, "that they longingly wish to be converted, but the bishops and priests of the neighbouring region (France) neglect them." The appeals had probably come through Bishop Lindhard from the Christian Gaulish princess who had married Ethelbert king of Kent: *Epist.* VI, 59, Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, LXXVII, col. 842 *seq.*

(26) P. 157. Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 143. Aidan's bones were carried to Ireland by Colman.

(27) P. 158. Reeves: "Adamnan's Life of S. Columba," p. 312.

(28) P. 158. O'Donnell's "Life of Columcille," p. 293. For other songs attributed in legend to Columcille see O'Donnell, p. 283.

CHAPTER IX

IRISH LEARNING

It was some fifty years after Columcille's death that the full bearing of his adjudication between the learned men of the ancient and the new schools was revealed. It remained for a later scholar to solve the way in which both could unite to give character to Irish life and tradition.

With the triumph of Christianity the men of native learning abandoned the name of *druid*, so long linked with heathen practice, and became known as *filid*, with a position equal to the nobles; while the druids, sunk by the seventh century into mere sorcerers, were ranked with craftsmen (1), and the Christian priest took the druid's place of superiority by the king. The *filid* however, claiming descent from the divine Tuatha dé Danann, guardians of the profane sciences, were held in high honour. The *brehon* or professional lawyer had to be "a jurist of the three languages"—ancient laws, the lore of the *filid*, and Latin learning. Formidable through their knowledge of traditional incantations and supernatural menace the *filid* could impose their will on the people, and were employed by kings as the most effective diplomatic envoys to make or to appease strife. As keepers of the people's history they had a national authority; with their poems chanted to the harp they rivalled the Christian sermons and legends of the saints; in the assemblies they established their traditional law beside the canons of the Church; as a central judicial body they formed the powerful link that held together under one law the whole commonwealth of small

states. In rank they were equals of the chief nobles and warriors: Dallán, chief *file* in Columcille's time, led with him a retinue of fifty followers, the same as that of a high-king; and those of lesser rank had their following assigned in due order of learning.

This powerful corporation maintained the study of native learning. They were charged with the traditions of ancient laws; with the most exact care of the language; with training in the rules of poetry; with the old nature-lore; and with the instruction of the people in public duties. The sacred custom of oral teaching was maintained for two centuries after the Latin method of writing had been brought into Ireland. Against the "library-provided schools" (2), as Dallán was reported to have called them, the fundamental traditions of Irish learning were taught orally in "a great number of verses." For their work of maintaining the national memory, the veneration of rulers, and the bonds of kinship, they were trained in reciting to kings and chiefs the great historic tales; from the chief *ollam* with three hundred and fifty tales, to the lowest in degree with seven (3). A list from the Book of Leinster gives a practical number of one hundred and eighty-seven tales, which would cover the nights from November to May especially dedicated to the telling of stories. The reciting of the great tales kept its place for centuries to come: "One office in the houses of great men," wrote the English Campion in Elizabeth's time, "is a tale-teller, who bringeth his lord on sleepe with tales vaine and frivolous." They were trained also in the art of poems or odes meet and lawful to recite on hills of assemblage and places of meetings; for it was the province of poetry to excite, of knowledge to explain, of genealogies to commemorate old bonds of friendship and the noble stories of the race (4). A tract in the Book of Leinster, held to date from earlier times, tells "Of the *qualifications* of Poets"; and describes the kinds of knowledge necessary for poets if they were to be entitled to the reverence due to men who had won the special rights of the *nemith* or sacred classes;

and gives a list of tales required to graduate in the schools.

But it was not enough to have the tales by heart or to recite them well; for "he is no poet who does not synchronize and adjust together all the stories." Throughout the country there lingered remnants of oral tradition, partly based on historical events, partly the universal folk-tale motives, partly perhaps indigenous inventions, mythological or other, of the Irish themselves. The great work of the *filid* was to gather up the ancient pieties of the peoples, and by uniting their traditions to form a body of epic material valid for all races old and new of the island. Out of this mass of material they had to make an ordered history. To give form and authority to fragments of oral tradition they used the fiction of calling up the heroes of the past to recite the ancient history of the island. Thus the warriors Oisin and Caelte were maintained for centuries in the sorrow and gloom of extreme old age till S. Patrick could hear with rapture their tales of the mighty hunting of Finn and his *fiana* (5). So also there could be no "settling of the manor of Tara" till Fintan, the sage saved from the Flood, had been summoned from the recesses of Kerry to recount to the nobles assembled on the Hill the conquests and wars of Ireland, its races and laws since the Deluge; while the whole congregation of the people rose up to hear the great tales of the ancients, for to them it "was an augmentation of the spirit and an enlargement of the mind."

Over against the traditional Irish teachers stood the professors of Latin and Christian learning (6). The chief schools of Latin learning had already before the time of Patrick passed from Rome to Gaul. When the borders of the Empire were broken through by invading hordes of Huns who overran Gaul and Spain from 406 A.D., and by the conquering Germanic peoples who followed them, learned men with their books fled for refuge to "a land beyond the sea"—the only country which had then escaped invasion and ruin—Ireland. Drifting over from

the Loire and the Garonne, or through Brittany to trading ports they established a new home of classical studies. The "rhetores" or rhetoricians of Patrick's time were perhaps among these immigrants. Professors from the chief university of Gaul—Burdigala (now Bordeaux)—seem to have formed a settlement and school of learning at Bordgal in Mide, which preserved the name of their old college in a new land. The refugees of learning brought to Ireland the arts of writing and reading, and the use of libraries. Trained in the best traditions of Latin grammar and oratory of the fourth century, they handed on that classic tradition of humanists which had been broken on the Continent. In their turn the pupils of Welsh or British scholars of the famous school of S. David of Menevia founded Irish schools of the sixth century, with the study of all known Latin authors old and new, and of grammar, metrics chronology, astronomy—and the tradition of solid hard work, and devoted pursuit of knowledge to the utmost limit of the latest scholarship, which gave to their schools the renown of "the perfection of Latin learning" (7). Students gained a wide and practical knowledge of Latin —Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Tacitus, Sallust, and the rest; and along with these they read the new literature of Spain and Gaul—Orosius and S. Isidore, S. Jerome and Victorius—writers of a later Latin which, if it had forgotten classical elegance, still carried on a vital tradition and remained the living tongue of thought and education. Its professors were a highly honoured body, "for," said the laws, "there is no Latin learning without franchise." The master of a school, equal in franchise to the king of a *tuath*, was known as *rośuí*, "great doctor," or *suí littre*, "doctor of the letter" (later called *fer légind*, head of a Latin school); the "second master of the Letter," *tánaise suad littre*, was expert in Canon Law; the "junior master," *ocsuí*, was a teacher; "man of a fourth of mastership," *fer cethramthan suithe*, was called "historian," probably one who had learned the historical

interpretation of Scripture (8). Below these came the grades of students.

In this early renascence Columbanus, educated at Bennchor, was no unworthy precursor of the scholars of the sixteenth century. He left Ireland about 580 A.D., and till his death in 615 was pre-eminent among the Gallo-Roman scholars and writers for the remarkable purity of his Latin scholarship, based on classical teaching in a sane tradition and constant communion with classic authors. His critical respect for Irish learning is shown by his comments on the chronological system devised by the then famous Victorius of Aquitaine : " Victorius was regarded with indulgence, not to say contempt, by our masters and by the ancient Irish philosophers " (9). The writings of the famous Gregory of Tours, who died while Columbanus was in Gaul, show how he himself felt the lack of that education which the Irish monks enjoyed amid the austerities and severities of their ascetic life : monks and priests by profession, as Kuno Meyer points out, they were scholars and humanists of the first order in their time (10). Though there are signs of some knowledge of Greek among the Irish, perhaps based mainly on mere vocabularies, there is no direct evidence of Greek studies till the ninth century (11). Greek in fact had perished in the west with the overthrow of Roman culture by the Germanic invasions. Irish scholars probably went to study at the Canterbury school of the Greek archbishop Theodore (664–690) ; but there is no trace of any books having been brought over by Theodore, and his oral teaching without texts died with him.

There were certainly books in Ireland, though very few, before S. Patrick's time ; his " Confessions " and " Letter " are the earliest Latin writings that have been preserved. For two centuries after his mission writing was taught only in the monastic schools : it was the special mark of Latin learning. To meet the need for biblical and religious teaching scribes were everywhere set to work to provide texts. The writing known as

semi-uncial was taken from the Latin, probably about the sixth century : another form, the minuscule, changed little from the eighth century down to modern times. In the oldest Irish manuscripts there is a distinct system of spelling based on the pronunciation of Latin used in the earliest Latin schools—a pronunciation distinctively British, not Continental, which lasted till the Norman invasion brought in the French usage. The principal scribe, whose honour- or blood-price was equal to that of an abbot or bishop, had under him a multitude of workers. With quills of geese, swans, or crows, they wrote on parchment made from skins of sheep, calves, and goats—often rough, and generally thicker than that used on the Continent, but in some cases, as in the Book of Kells, so fine as to be even transparent. Lines fancifully ascribed to Columcille are gay : " My little dripping pen travels across the plain of shining books. On the page it squirts its draught of ink of the green-skinned holly." But chance notes on the margin of the page in successive centuries tell of the griefs of scribes : " I am very cold ; " " Alas my hand ; " " new parchment, bad ink, oh, I say nothing more ; " " 'tis above my strength for its difficulty ; " " what pity for any to be like me with no friend but a dog, with no servant but his own hands, and nothing in the shape of a goblet but his shoe ; " " Alas O my hand, that thou hast written on white parchment ! The parchment thou hast made famous, but thou, what wilt thou become—the bare extremity of a bundle of bones." " It is necessary for whosoever professes the art of grammar that he should collect all the forms " (12). The skill of Irish scribes, if they learned writing late, was never surpassed and was in demand all over Europe : their manuscripts remain the wonder and admiration of modern critics.

By a curious accident the union of the two schools of learning was brought about in the course of a family feud between the leading branches of the Uí Neill for the high-kingship (13). In 614 Suibne Menn of Tír Eógain

defeated Mael Choba of Tír Conaill. Mael Choba's brother Domnall, with his foster-son Congal Cláen, a prince of Dál nAraide, fled to Eochaid Buide, king of Dál Ríata in Alba. They returned in 627 to try their fortunes, but failed in the battle of Botha (Raphoe), and Domnall fled once more. The next year however (628) Suibne Menn was killed by Congal Cláen, and Domnall became high-king (627–641). Congal, whose "friends might as well converse with a rock as advise him," claimed a reward from his foster-father. Contemptuous alike of the druids of the Picts and the clerics of the king, he forced a battle and was defeated at Dún Ceithirnn in 629. Again he took refuge with Eochaid Buide of Dál Ríata at Dún Monaid in Lorne, and seems to have been concerned for some ten years in seeking alliances and shaping plots for revenge.

The shadow of Columcille falls across the story of this passionate strife. Domnall the high-king, of the saint's house of Conall Gulban, was son of king Áed who had presided over the Assembly of Druim Ceatt. Eochaid Buide, king of Dál Ríata, was son of king Áedán who had accompanied Columcille to the Assembly. Himself fostered by Columcille, he had given a pledge to the saint that he would never invade the territory of the high-kings of Ireland nor make war on them, and according to tradition he refused to violate his vow for Congal Cláen. But on his death in 628 his son and successor Domnall Brecc broke the pious tradition, tempted by the chance of extending his Irish Dál Ríata and probably winning the high-kingship.

We only know of the dispute and battle of the kings from an Irish epic romance written after the Norse wars, probably in its present form as late as the thirteenth century. This tale, by a native of Tír Conaill, was deeply influenced by the traditions of the *Táin*, the story of the fall of Emain, the invasions of the three Collas and the vicissitudes of the Red Branch heroes, their wrongs, their fabled genealogies, and the glories of the twin brothers

Eógan and Conall Gulban: it may indeed have been inspired by the great national rally of that time led by the kings of Tír Eógain and Tír Conaill. In spite, however, of the literary licence of an epic and its patriotic ardours, many details must have been preserved by a faithful Irish tradition. Congal Cláen in his pride is reported as making no small pretensions. The hurt to his eye by a bee-sting while he was fosterling, from which he got his name of Cláen, "the wry-eyed," was the least of his grievances. By descent from the kings of Emain Macha he claimed to be "Congal of Macha," inheritor of the whole ancient "Fifth" as it had been in the days of Cú Chulainn. He denounced the usurpations of "the race of Conn" in their invasions of Airgíalla and In Fochla which had left the "Province of Conchobor" "decapitated," so that the land from the mouth of the Boyne to the Drowes was "without a champion of the race of Rudraige." In vain the "old grey king" Domnall of the Tír Conaill offered fabulous concessions to Congal, "the darling nursling of my heart," the very rumour of which should have been enough to infuriate the Cenél nEógain.

The Annals barely record "Bellum Roth 636"—the battle of Mag Rath, or Moira near Lisburn—where Domnall the high-king met Domnall Brecc of Dál Ríata in a conflict where the fate of the Uí Neill and of the northern province was to be decided. The road from Tara to Armagh was carried to the north right and left of Loch Neagh: on the eastern side it led by Mag Rath, "the plain of wheels," on a lift of higher ground above wide marshes and forests ("la route" as the Normans called it), to the fort of Dunseverick, where the king of the Ulaid in older times had kept his hostages. The road west of the loch led to Saltire, almost opposite to Moira; there a battle was fought and won on the same day as Mag Rath, where it would seem that a revolting section of the Cenél nEógain marching to join Domnall Brecc were intercepted and broken by the forces of the high-king. Of the battle of Mag Rath itself, June 24th, 637,

we only know what hints of old tradition may have survived in the conventional setting of the tale in the thirteenth century. Eochaid in the legend is said to have taken the field at the head of a combination of forces. The Picts of Dál nAraide sent their army and with it Suibne son of Colmán Cuar, the Pictish king. The Ulaid were led by their own king. Congal had been sent moreover by Domnall Brecc with thirty ships to Wales to ask aid, where he sat in assembly at the Welsh king's right hand as "king of the Ulaid," probably claiming the whole of the old Fifth: it was boasted that he gathered troops not only from the Welsh but from Saxons and Franks. The high-king Domnall on his side collected hostings for his defence from Ossory, where he had married, and from all the Fifths of Ireland. We are told of his sleepless night before the battle, going out to see what auguries might be in the rising sun. We have the long list of wrongs of the high-king opening with the words, "What shall we do with Congal Cláen, O Lord of heaven of saints," which were laid before an Assembly called to decide whether they should accept battle; and at the close of the fight we hear the scornful tale of a broken enemy flying before the race of Conall Gulban without pausing for the chiefs to meet and give orders. The fierce bursts of the loud-howling north wind and squalls of hailstones on the field of slaughter are remembered; the druids, still dominant among the Pictish races, issued their prophecies in face of the new scepticisms: while the thirty clerics chanted psalms for the army of the high-king, and renewed the predictions of Columcille. The Tír Conaill writer taunts the soldiers of the oversea king as no Irish, but mere foreign invaders: "Why have they left their home, the sons of Eochaid from Alba?" "Erin of many adventures is not your native land." He exults in the "hereditary fury and northern madness" of warriors from Tory island and Kilmacrennan—"heroes not mild to be commanded." In the war where foster-sons and brothers fought, he recalls the griefs of that civil

strife, and the heroic fidelities of champions who refused to slay, and tells how the defeated king Domnall Brecc was brought alive to the high-king Domnall to plead that his father had been fostered by Columcille himself, of Domnall's own ancestral line.

According to an old story of Mag Rath, " three were the glories of that battle " : the defeat of Congal Cláen in his falsehood by Domnall in his truth ; the madness of Suibne Geilt ; and the taking of Cenn Fáelad's brain of forgetfulness out of his head. Suibne, son of the king of Dál nAraide, " that mild man of hosts, the white-fingered stripling," had never before been a lunatic void of valour ; but " fits of giddiness came over him at the horrors " of the fight, and in " hard quick showers of hailstones—an omen of slaughter to the men of Ireland "—he fled in a sudden frenzy. Terrified by the pursuing cry, " Let not the man with the wonderful gold-embroidered tunic pass from you without capture and revenge," he turned his back on mankind, " to herd with deer, to run along with the showers, and flee with the birds, and feast in wildernesses," so that " by lunacy he determined his counsels from that out as long as he lived." Elsewhere we read of the ceaseless wanderings of *fer benn*, " the man of peaks," from shore to shore of Ireland ; " gloomy this life " of starvation and tempest, in which he is said to have made his songs (14) of all the trees of Ireland, of the grey forest, the cry of the heron, the bird above the wood, the Nature of which he had become the outcast and the intimate. Some poet told of his singing in his Mide refuge, the little ivy-covered oratory of Tuaim Inbir, an ingenious house built by Gobbán Saer : " My heartlet God from Heaven, He is the thatcher who also hath thatched it. A house wherein wet rain pours not, a place wherein spear-points are not feared, bright as though in a garden, and it without a fence round it " (15). Such succour as could be given to his wandering genius he found with S. Moling till his death—S. Moling the witty, the universal friend : " When I am among my seniors I am proof that sport is

forbidden; when I am among the mad young folk they think that I am the junior."

As for Cenn Fáelad, his head was cleft by an idiot youth, once his foster-brother at Domnall's court; and as his fame grew it was counted as one of the three glories of the fight that through the wound "his brain of forgetting was taken from his head" (16). The young warrior was carried to the care of the surgeon Briccéne, abbot of Tuaim Drecain, by whom in the three years treatment ordered for a cloven skull he was ultimately cured, to become on his recovery the mediator and reconciler of ancient and modern learning, the greatest leader of the new Irish tradition. Like Columcille he was of the greatly gifted line of Niall—a prince of the house of Cenél nÉógain. From his great-grandfather, Mac Erca, three generations had held the high-kingship; he himself was eligible by birth to the kingship of Ailech, and to the high-kingship of Ireland.

The school of Tuaim Drecain or Toomregan in Bréifne, near Mag Slécht, was an old centre, as we have seen, of pagan worship. It was probably an ancient site of a druid school, to which a modern Christian school of Latin had been added some time before 637. Three streets where the students must have lived met between the houses of the three chief professors at the Schools of Irish lore; of Law; and of Latin. In the Irish schools law and ancient knowledge were taught after the traditional oral method. In the Latin school students were instructed by writing and books. What Cenn Fáelad learned each day by heart, he wrote down in the new script at night. Outwardly conforming to the customary rules of the *filid*, he thus became in fact the greatest innovator of his time. For the first time, somewhere about 640 A.D., Irish learning was set down in Latin script, and was given the permanent record in books which till then had been reserved for Latin. Before Cenn Fáelad died he probably saw even in Irish schools the practice of noting down on waxed tablets important

matters which were afterwards written out on parchment (17). In the earliest writings the transition can be traced from the old mnemonic oral teaching to the expositions of jurists accustomed to writing in prose.

The studies which made him famous were carried on later at Daire Lurainn (Derryloran) on a little river flowing from the west into lough Neagh. The oldest remnants of written Irish learning that remain are legal maxims of the Brehon laws, which in part have come down to us in a primitive verse form ; and it is interesting that in tradition Cenn Fáelad remains to us as the first authentically recorded writer on Irish law, bringing together rules and maxims which had been handed down separately in the oral tradition. Fragments of poetry ascribed to him show him skilled in combining the literary art of the Latin world and of the Irish people—the immemorially ancient rhythmic form of old Irish verse, and the new Latin metre and rhyme, of which he is the earliest writer we know who was not an ecclesiastic. His poetry was of an order little welcomed, or even forbidden in monasteries as not being devoted to religious subjects. An acute historical sense is shown by quatrains from a lost poem dealing with events a century and a half before his own time, and by his clear vision of what the battle of Druim Dergaide in 517 had meant, when " the plain of Mide was lost and won." Fragments of " the Book of Cenn Fáelad," a treatise on Irish grammar, have been preserved by a commentator writing in the ninth century, who adds the comment on Mag Rath that the memorable thing " is not the removal of his brain of forgetting from his head, but all that he left after him of good workmanship of books in Ireland." To his own people he was " an eminent person," and to him alone as a layman they gave the title of *Sapiens*, in every other case strictly reserved to the most learned churchmen. In his labours for thirty years after Mag Rath till his death in 670, this fine scholar justified the work of Columcille at Druim

Ceatt, and established the union of the Latin and Irish schools in a common culture.

Irish scholars were quick to seize the importance of the permanent record in writing of their national tradition, as we see by an old legend which refers to the time when their tales first began to be written. It tells of a Roman sage who brought with him to Armagh the *Cuilmen of Isidorus*, written about 630, which was then held to be the last word in human knowledge; and took away in exchange the only volume of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. The bargain made a great stir when some time before 657 the loss of the Irish book became known. Guaire, king of Connacht († 663 or 666), descended from Fiachra brother of Niall, invited to his famous house of hospitality Senchán the chief poet of Connacht (he who died in 657), and a great company of the *filid*. Asking for the story of the Cattle-spoil, Senchán learned that the poets knew no more than scattered fragments of the tale: he earnestly enquired of his fosterlings which of them would volunteer to go with his blessing to the continent to learn the Táin, the record which the Roman sage had lately taken away from Armagh. The envoys began their journey by visiting in Mayo the tomb of Fergus mac Roig, the hero who as having been a prominent actor in the war, with friends in both camps, was best fitted to give a full and unbiassed story. There Senchán's son sang so noble a song of praise that the spirit of Fergus rose up before the *filid*, and rehearsed for them the whole of the pagan tale (18).

The "recovery" of the *Táin* was celebrated in one of the Old Irish triads: "Three wonders concerning the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*: that the *Cuilmen* came to Ireland in its stead; the dead relating it to the living, viz. Fergus mac Roig reciting it to Ninnine the poet in the time of Cormac mac Faeláin; one year's protection to him to whom it is recited" (19). The Irish monks of Monasterboice on the Boyne, where probably the tale was first written down, preserved old words and names of

places and races, ancient and disused customs of war-chariots and battle, traditions of warriors' shields and weapons and ornaments long obsolete at the time of writing, the remnants of matriarchal customs, the warlike organizations of ancient peoples, so that the Saga still remains a document of historic value. It recalled to the remnant of the broken Ulaid the glorious tradition of Ulidian rule in Emain. With its fore-tales and stories of the Ulster cycle it became the classic model on which all later compilers of traditions worked. Other Irish provinces shaped their own heroic legends after its example. Throughout Ireland the ancient kindreds employed the genealogists, the Heralds' College of their time, to trace for them a noble descent from one of the heroes of the *Táin*. This great prose epic of the *literati* —the oldest existing literature of any of the peoples who dwelt to the north of the Alps, as Dr. MacNeill points out, was the first appearance of forces which were ultimately to shape out of the Roman Empire new European States distinguished by their own national literature.

With the breaking down of the barriers and throwing open of the gates of knowledge on both sides, an exultant enthusiasm of intellectual and artistic adventure swept over Ireland, giving to a land of peace a renown which far exceeded any fame that prowess in war, however remarkable, ever secured for the Irish. When missionaries first brought the Latin alphabet they had found in Ireland a speech already formed and cultivated, both in prose and poetry, and ready to be enriched with the new learning. Irish scholars now made for their country a position without parallel in that age as the first among the western peoples, outside Greece and Rome, to perfect their language and create in the common speech the earliest national literature known to the new Europe. Ecclesiastics in Gaul disdained the talk of the native or Romance tongue, which they called the *lingua laica*. In England the legend of S. Guthlac told that having been among the British he understood and spoke " the speech of the devil."

The clergy and monks of Ireland however, along with their study of classical writings and ecclesiastical knowledge, continued to cultivate with enthusiasm their own language. Their learned men were the first writers on the science of a native grammar. They developed in prose the heroic epic; and a lyrical poetry in which consummate art was used to serve the most sensitive feeling and observation. In the sixth century the poets had two traditions: that of Dallán Forgaill, who wrote the panegyric of Columcille in the style and rhythm that had come down from pagan times; and the newer school, which had adopted the metrical form based on Latin hymns. In the seventh century the two schools alike used the Latin metres, adapting them with every conceivable variety and complexity. An Old-Irish grammar dating in part from the end of the eighth century speaks of Irish as "a choice language," superior to other tongues. For its praise the Learned invented an ancestor Fenius who was at the building of the Tower of Babel (20), and by a selection of the languages spoken there composed the Irish speech—a fable which no doubt arose from a perception of similarity between many Irish words and words in Greek, Latin, Welsh, Anglo-Saxon. If Latinists wrote their first books and annals in the accepted tongue of European learning, Irish soon served for nearly all kinds of secular literature. By the middle of the eighth century (contrary to the custom of other countries) it was used for religious instruction, and to some extent in the services of the Church. Kuno Meyer notes that till the fourteenth century there is no inscription on the tomb of an Irishman which is not in Irish (21).

Irish literary influence spread over-sea to Wales and Scotland, where it seems to have carried its feeling for nature and love of country. Modern scholars find evidence that the nature-poetry of Wales had come to it from Ireland; and that "Irish literature, ancient and modern, written and oral, has been of far greater service than Welsh in proving the Celtic origin of the Grail legend" (22).

From the earliest time music was celebrated in Irish literature, everywhere and eternally—with warning not to mar it by vain talk. That music has been practically lost to us by the smashing of all Irish instruments in later evil times. There is a Welsh tradition of a musical session held in Glyn Achlach in Ireland at which were drawn up " the twenty-four measures " and their twenty-four arrangements and versions or variations. Other evidences survive to show that both Scotch and Welsh found their models in instruments, tunes, and measures used in Ireland (23).

The place of Irish in the national life is shown by the fact that nowhere in Europe except in Ireland were educated men trained bilingually, with a full knowledge of both the foreign and the home language. Further, in continental schools at that time it was almost unknown that a layman—prince or soldier or merchant—should be a man of scholarly learning. In Ireland it was the common idea that a layman no less than an ecclesiastic should have learning according to his ability. The Irish system of local courts in fact required that the wealthier people should know the law adequately, and probably the schools of law were open to them. We find the Irish regard for lay learning carried to the continent in the missionary settlement of S. Gall, where there was an inner school for the instruction of novices, and an outer school for laymen.

The writing down of Irish legend and history probably began in the sixth and seventh centuries (24). *Filid* and monks alike, the " synthetic historians " as they have been called, proposed to construct the story of the Irish people, duly harmonized and fitted with dates—a traditional record from Adam down to S. Patrick, after which historians could rely on their own knowledge. Accounts of ancient Irish peoples, their descent and migrations, show how closely Virgil was read. From Orosius scholars took the description of the world in which the legendary " Scotti " roamed before they reached Ireland. The Scythian origin of the Gaels, the geographical details of

their wanderings, the tower of Bregon, the landing at an unknown Inber Scéne—such were the inventions suggested to the Irish by the continental scholars and writers of the time (25). The chronicle of Eusebius († 340), in its Latin translation by S. Jerome and its continuation to 445 by Prosper of Aquitaine, became the model and framework of their Irish history—a form of world-history in parallel columns, with the reigns and chief events ranged in due order under the four accepted epochs established by Latin writers, the Assyrian Empire, the Median Empire, the usurpation of the Magi in Persia, Alexander's Empire. To give Ireland its due place in the record, biblical and classical, a skeleton of Irish history was added in these columns. The early chroniclers faithfully copied the Latin columns of empires and kings, the scanty lists of events, and added their dry and formal notes, according to the limited end they had in view. Tradition and history however were not delegated to the Latinists alone. Many of the early synthetists were lay poets. The *filid* took their share in gathering fragments of tradition to form the ground-work; old sagas and stories were woven together, and blanks boldly filled up. Calendars kept in the churches for the regulation of festivals were used for entering brief notices of interesting events, such as the one at Iona in the seventh century which was drawn upon by Irish historians: all these alike perished in the Norse invasions. As ancient traditions found their way into the monastic schools national influence became paramount. Christian monks who had lost none of their affection for the old lore of their country collected all that they could find regarding Ireland and its pagan records; even if at the end of their manuscript they felt bound to add a prayer or a profession of Christian faith repudiating devil-worship. "I who write this history, or rather fable," adds a writer of the *Táin* in the twelfth century, "bestow no faith on certain things in this history or fable. Some things in it are illusions of demons, some poetical invention, some probable, some not, some for the amusement of fools."

In the brave effort to furnish dates for the Irish invasions to agree with the Latin epochs of world-history, the intricate methods of chronology of that age provoked endless confusion and contradiction. As for the genealogies, by a series of learned figments and invented names the dynasties and aristocracies were grafted into the descent and succession of "Milesius" of Spain ("Miles" in Nennius, "Míl" in Irish, from the Latin word for soldier). For the fame of Tara above all it was necessary to secure to its kings a respectable pedigree some two thousand years before its time, with Míl as the royal ancestor. All was duly provided by the learned. They showed however a marked discretion with regard to the high-kingship. Careful not to claim sole possession of an all-Ireland sovereignty for one ancestral line alone, they began their list of kings with names representing the dynasties of Cashel and Tara, and presently added those of the Ulaid and the Laigin; while they did not burden their genealogies with mention of kingly houses feeble or extinct and no longer dangerous. Every powerful line was thus given an equal dignity, with a share in the central kingship and pride in its maintenance. It was evident that kings and nobles of the provinces, and the heroes of the *fiana*, could have no mean descent, and genealogies multiplied, with the universal object of linking together in one fellowship all the famous names in Ireland. According to Eoin MacNeill the great bulk of these genealogies are valid for the Christian period, beyond that doubtful, and in remote ages legendary and artificial, with mythological names. They carry, however, embedded in them fragments of ancient tradition.

Many peoples of Ireland shared in the national literature. In the seventh century S. Mochúaróc, known by the special distinction of *Sapiens*, "the learned," who introduced a reform into the Irish chronography of his time, was a member of the Rivet-folk, the *Semonrige* of the Dési. The first chronicler was probably Sinlan or Mo Shinu moccu Min, abbot of Bennchor—a patriot seeking to shape a prehistoric history of Ireland from the

standpoint of the Ulaid. His work contains a genuine Irish tradition from about 300, and has the oldest account we know of the Northern kings and of the kings of Tara. The year of his death, 609 A.D., " finis Chronici Eusebii," opened a new series of manuscript Annals continued, as Dr. MacNeill records, for over a thousand years—the " Book of Cúanu " about 620 A.D., the " Old Irish Chronicle " about 680–702, the " Laud Genealogies," with historical legends and a tabular synchronic history in 752, and the contemporary annals during the eighth and succeeding centuries, down to the work of the Four Masters in 1636.

In the making of the Irish nation from 600 A.D. all the great lines of literary tradition were laid down, as the learned men gathered up and moulded into national form the history, geography, law, language, and religion of the island. A study so devoted and so prolonged became the strong link that united the many various peoples of the land, and the whole number of its petty independent states under the common law of a national life. Beginning with the seventh century every Irish history is a history of Ireland—there is no account of a single *tuath* or of any separate group of kingdoms. The genealogies compiled by the Wise Men, and recited at the general assemblies of the *tuatha*, became the foundation of a common record of the race. Elaborated by the official scholars, and accepted by the leading dynasties, the feeling grew of one people, united in the pride of a common heroic race. Through the songs of the poets the legends of the *fiana* belonged to the whole people of Ireland. From the beginning of their adventures tales of heroes and local war-bands passed from *tuath* to *tuath* and province to province, till they became part of the accepted story of the race, and in the ninth century entered into its written literature. Finn of the ancient race, " not of the Góidil," was given a pedigree made up from the genealogies of all the chief ruling houses: the *fiana* themselves, whatever was the province of their exploits, became the "*fiana Eireann.*" Their fighting and their hunting, their peril in mountain and flood and forest,

their chivalry in life, their fidelity in death, the imminent tragedy of their doom, their nearness in the hills to the company of the non-human beings of the earth and air, their solemn waiting for the final judgment—the marvellous tale of human life as it grew ravished the Gaelic people for a thousand years to come. In the same way Irish saints took their place in the common tradition. A *félire* of about 800 A.D., which has been attributed to S. Oengus, gave, along with well-known continental saints, the festivals of the principal saints of Ireland. Henceforth the genealogies of the Irish saints were preserved, and the holy men of every part of the island became "Ireland's saints," "a profit to Ireland universally" (26).

To its inhabitants Ireland was from the first a subject of absorbing interest. Chiefs on their rounds were accompanied by their poets to celebrate the venerable yews, the mountains and lakes and plains that had seen the story of the past. Descriptions of the high or noble places were a part of the very earliest literature. The beauty of the land moved the affections of its poets to songs which have no parallel in any country at that time—songs of Nature in her grandest forms and in the lowliest beauties of wood and field. By degrees Irish scholars wove together the topographical tracts and poems of the provinces, all that might give to the island majesty, beauty, or traditional renown, and gathered them into a kind of glorified geography—the great *Dindshenchas*, the classical account of the island and its high places. The subject of this work is simply Ireland. Its only connecting motive is to give the Irish a complete and brilliant picture of Ireland from all antiquity. One of the legends of the great Finn tells how a magical woman on her way to the "Country of the Young" offered to take the warrior with her to that paradise. "We give you our thanks for that," said Finn, "but we would not give up our own country if you had the whole of the world belonging to you, and the Country of the Young along with it."

In their own land the Irish were divided into a number of small and self-sufficient states: they were in direct

intercourse with every part of Europe through their traders, artists, scholars, missionaries, and travellers: but neither foreign communications nor the variety of their own states confused the fundamental sense of national unity and love of country. Monasteries and schools of learning drew together the scholarship of the old world and the new in the beginnings of Irish literature; and became centres of a teaching dominated by the consciousness of a national life, and of the unity of the country. The kingly supremacy, often wavering irregularly among four chief branches of the race of Niall, steadied down to a settled order from the middle of the eighth century between the northern stock of Cenél nÉógain and the midland princes of Clann Cholmáin; and in the ninth century the *Lebhor na g-Ceart* (the Book of Rights) gathered into one system the grouping of the various races and their obligations to the over-kings. Free from external danger, hospitable to strangers, themselves great travellers, a people increasing in wealth, they used the opportunities of their time with an extraordinary activity which we can now see only in part. During the Norse invasions and later centuries of wars of conquest, the violent destruction of Irish schools, the exile of their professors, and the proscription of their learning, a vast mass of material has been irretrievably lost. Whole legendary cycles are now known only by casual references, a number of the tales by the bare titles which survive, and many hundreds of poems from mere fragments, or even from the initial lines which have been preserved. Out of what seemed hopeless confusion modern scholars have shown the way to lines of research by which we may reach to some true idea of Old Irish civilization.

The amazing energy of the Irish in these centuries of their free self-government was not confined to their own land. We must add to it the most remarkable missionary effort known in Europe for the variety and vivacity of its

enterprise and the long centuries of its endurance. From the time of Columbanus the succession of pilgrims and missionaries and teachers never failed during four hundred years. Their work of restoring culture and Christian faith to a shattered Europe reached south as far as Tarentum, and east to Kiev on the highway of trade through Russia to the Black Sea. It was said of them that the habit of pilgrimage had become to the Irish almost a second nature, so amazing was the number of the wanderers, and so wide the limits of their journeying. The *peregrini* founded schools of classical and ecclesiastical learning and the fine art of writing. They taught the skilled methods of agriculture which had been developed in Ireland. In the court of Charlemagne Irish learning took the first place; the Irish scholar Clement was professor of grammar in the "School of Padua" about 780, and was later the teacher of Lothair, son of the Emperor Louis and king of Italy. That there was frequent intercourse across the sea even between west Ireland and the Rhineland through merchant vessels we know from a letter by the celebrated Alcuin (no doubt from the palace school of Charlemagne) to Colgu professor in Clonmacnois, complaining that for some time past he was not "deemed worthy to receive any of those letters so precious in my sight from your fatherhood," but he daily feels the benefit of his absent father's prayers; and sends the brotherhood an alms of fifty sicles of silver from the bounty of King Charles, and fifty more from his own resources, with a quantity of olive oil to be distributed amongst the bishops in God's honour († 804).

One of the wonders of European history will always be the story of Irish missionaries, and the wealth of charity with which they liberally gave back to Europe what they had received from it. An honourable record remains in the remembrance of continental peoples through ten or fifteen hundred years. There are whole tracts of Europe where Irish saints are still held in reverence (27). S. Brigid "enjoys a remarkable popularity through all western Europe," especially in the country parts of

SURVIVALS OF IRISH MISSIONS

Note:- *In addition to the names in Mid-Europe the important town of Kiev on the easternmost road to the Black Sea must be remembered.*

Reproduced by permission from Dom Louis Gougaud's "Les Chrétientés Celtiques."

Emery Walker Ltd. sc.

Brittany, the district of S. Omer, among the Wallon peasantry, and in Liguria: S. Coloman in the Palatinate, Suabia, Bavaria, Austria, and Hungary: S. Brendan throughout the German provinces along the Baltic coast: S. Columban in Germany and Brittany: S. Kilian as the "Apostle of Franconia": S. Fursa in Picardy and the diocese of Amiens: S. Gall in sixty Swiss localities, in Bavaria, in more than a dozen German, Lorraine and Alsatian churches: S. Fiacre in Alsace and many other regions. A map compiled by the leading authority, Dom Gougaud, does not pretend to show all the districts where successful Irish missions were established. It indicates merely the towns and villages where special customs and festivals still attest the long memory of the poor for examples left to them of piety and fellowship. Far beyond the eastern limits of the map as shown here lies in the original Kiev in Russia, to which messengers from the community of Saint-James of Ratisbon (founded by Marianus Scottus) penetrated. The little-known hamlet of San Pellegrino on a narrow spur of the Apennines is dedicated to the memory of an unknown pilgrim, "son of a Scot king" (known there as a "Scotchman"), who returning from the Holy Land with his servant made his home in this solitary spot, where from his "seat" of meditation at the extremity of the spur he looked across prodigious steeps and precipices to the Carrara mountains. The two figures lie together to this day in a glass shrine, in mediæval garments renewed from time to time, when the country people gather at the yearly festival of the Irish saints.

During the Norse wars the stream of missionaries became a flight of refugees from monasteries and schools, carrying their manuscripts. We have in Sedulius of Liège (and he was no isolated phenomenon), an instance of the position which one of the Irish *literati*, straight from his learned studies in an Irish monastery, could take among the leading scholars at that time in Europe. This Sedulius had the singular fate of being lost for a thousand years, till the discovery in 1839 of a single

manuscript now in Brussels at last restored to us his name and his fame (28). Arriving at Liège somewhere between 840 and 850, with two other Irish scholars, he was attached at once by archbishop Hartgar to his famous school of learning. Director of studies in the cathedral school—in other words minister of public instruction—guide and teacher of scribes copying manuscripts, correspondent with literary celebrities over Europe, an infallible authority by his own account, and it appears by common consent, as to the arts and poetry, he became one of the leading promoters of the first renascence of learning in Liège. As their most admired Latinist he was public orator of the city (and school) to welcome the processions of emperors and kings, Lothair I, Charles the Bald, Louis the German, Lothair II, with princes of the Church, bishops and counts without number, who came to visit its rising glories. Presented to Lothair I by archbishop Hartgar he was as popular at Aix as at Liège, instructor of the Emperor's sons Lothair and Charles; while the Empress embroidered his verses in gold thread on silk. He sang the interview between Charles the Bald and Louis the German in 874. He was companion of Hartgar in his perilous journey across the Alps to negotiate for the Empire with the Pope, and was introduced to the great men at Rome.

The eighty-seven poems of Sedulius that have survived illustrate the character of Irish classical training at that time—a cold and pedantic erudition laboriously acquired, its chief passion being for elegant composition. He seems to have known Greek, from stray words and even sentences written in that language, and proudly called his muse *Graecula*, and even *Ethiopissa*, with a sly joke at Alcuin who had complained to Charles the Great of his favour to an Irish scholar—"I left about you Latins; I don't know who has replaced them by Egyptians." Most faithful citizen of Liège as he was, he never lost his ardent love of Ireland, gathering Irish scholars about him, and ever bringing the name of his country into his poems. For long years he enjoyed continued honours and

festivities, amusing himself with writing Latin poems and descriptions of that glorious epoch of Liège history—its college banqueting hall with finely painted walls, and windows it would seem of coloured glass, its stately pomp and ceremony, its wealth and feastings. From all this splendour Sedulius finally disappeared in darkness, probably before a new onrush of the pirate hosts. But he left to his adopted land the only account which now exists of the fifty years of their fine renascence before the burning of Liège by the barbarians in 881.

The work of Irish emigrants, whether of missionaries or of scholars, has perhaps been more generously recognized than that of home toilers for Irish civilization. But the countless emigrants who spent themselves in service of others "for the love of God" could leave no mark on the development of their own people, and the history of their labours lies outside the history of Ireland itself.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER IX.

(1) P. 161. Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Laws: The Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16), p. 268. For the *fili* see p. 273.
(2) P. 162. "Silva Gadelica," II, 527.
(3) P. 162. De Jubainville: "Cours de Littérature Celtique," I, pp. 319 *seq.*
(4) P. 162. O'Donovan: "The Battle of Magh Rath" (edited with translation and notes for the Irish Archæological Society), pp. 93–97.
(5) P. 163. "Silva Gadelica," II, 101 *seq.* (Colloquy of the Ancients). Also *Eriu*, IV, p. 121.
(6) P. 163. For Irish learning see Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," pp. 242–243, 285–293, 330–335.
(7) P. 164. O'Rahilly: "Ireland and Wales," p. 52. Cf. "Lives of the Cambro-British Saints."
(8) P. 165. For the seven grades of Latin learning see MacNeill: "Law of Status," p. 313. The tract *Miadlechta* divides the free population into four orders: civil, Latin-learned, Irish-learned, and ecclesiastical: *ib.*, p. 312.
(9) P. 165. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 166. See also p. 240.
(10) P. 165. Kuno Meyer: "Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century," p. 12.
(11) P. 165. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 243.

(12) P. 166. Stokes and Strachan, "Thesaurus Palæohibernicus," p. 49; Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 332.

(13) P. 166. For the battle of Magh Rath see O'Donovan: "The Battle of Magh Rath" (edited with translation and notes for the Irish Archæological Society), and also *Eriu*, V, p. 227.

(14) P. 170. See "*Buile Suibne* (The Frenzy of Suibhne)," edited by J. G. O'Keeffe (Irish Texts Society, Vol. XII); also *Eriu*, II, p. 95.

(15) P. 170. Stokes and Strachan: "Thesaurus Palæohibernicus," II, p. 294.

(16) P. 171. For Cenn Fáelad see the articles by Eoin MacNeill entitled "A Pioneer of Nations" in *Studies*, March, 1922 and Sept. 1922.

(17) P. 172. See Reeves: "Adamnan's Life of Columcille," p. lviii.

(18) P. 173. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 15, 16. See also *Studies* for September 1922, p. 446, and *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, V, pp. 103–132. The account of the *Cuilmen* by Tomas O'Maille in *Eriu*, IX, pp. 71 *seq.*, shows us how the Milesian collectors of pagan tales went about their work, explaining their difficulties by the supposition of an original epic tale which through lapse of time had lost its first perfection, degenerating into fragments; and of manuscripts stolen and carried oversea. Cf. O'Rahilly: "Ireland and Wales," p. 97.

(19) P. 173. Kuno Meyer: "Triads of Ireland" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XIII, p. 9, No. 62).

(20) P. 175. MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 100.

(21) P. 175. Kuno Meyer in *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, Band 130, Heft. 1/2, p. 155. In the eighth century the wise men and saints are the outstanding facts of the Annals, exceeding kings and violent acts and convulsions of nature.

(22) P. 175. Cecile O'Rahilly: "Ireland and Wales," p. 147.

(23) P. 176. *Ib.*, p. 134.

(24) P. 176. Eoin MacNeill: "Annals of Tigernach" (*Eriu*, VII, Part 1). "Phases of Irish History," p. 175. For the *Lebhor Gabála*, see "Celtic Ireland," pp. 2, 17, 35.

(25) P. 177. For the synthetic historians see Eoin MacNeill, "Celtic Ireland," chaps. II, III, and IV. "Phases of Irish History," pp. 89 *seq.*, 98, 114.

(26) P. 180. "Silva Gadelica," II, 24, 27.

(27) P. 182. For Irish missionaries and pilgrims abroad, see Dom Louis Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," pp. 154, 161–167; "Gaelic Pioneers of Christianity."

The shrine of San Pellegrino, accidentally found by me on a stray journey in the Alps, was dedicated to the son of a king called as usual in modern times a "Scotch" king. It is probable that many more traditions could be discovered by travellers on the continent.

(28) P. 185. For Sedulius see Henri Pirenne: "Sedulius de Liège" (Brussels, 1882. Extrait des *Mémoires de l'Academie royale de Belgique;* collection in-8°, tome XXXIII).

	Political.	Ecclesiastical.	Learning and Literature.		Arts and Crafts.	
Féni Nemith — Flaithi (Rulers)	Ruiri (over-King)					
	Rí (King)	Bishop	Ollamh	Sui litre, Ollam gáise	Ollam briugad, Briugu cétach	
	Aire forgaill	Priest	Anruth			
	Aire ard	Deacon	Clí	Tánaise suad litre	Ollam suad sáirse	
	Aire túise	Subdeacon	Cano	Ócsuí		
	Aire echta	Exorcist	Doss			
	Aire désa	Usher	MacFuirmid	Fercethramthan suithe	Ollam Foccail	
Fodla Febe (Worthies)	Boaire túise	Lector	Fochloccán			
	Boaire tánaise				Cruitlire	Doer-nemith
	Brug-fer				Carpat-soer, etc.	
	Fer midbad				Tornóir, etc.	
	Garid					
	Flesach					
	Inol					
Aithig (Plebeians)	Soer-chéle				Musician, charioteer, etc.	
	Doer-chéle					
	Bothach					
	Senchleithe					
	Soer-fuidir					
	Doer-fuidir					
	Mug (slave)					
	Cumal (slave-woman)					

Table to Illustrate Social Grades.—*E. MacNeill.*

CHAPTER X

SOCIAL GRADES

We have already seen the responsibilities of the petty kingdoms or *tuatha*, where each *rí* held his court for home and foreign affairs, to do justice for his state and provide for negotiations and treaties with neighbouring kingdoms. But within the *tuath* there were other local courts in which the freemen decided matters of importance to their common life. Land questions, such as the distribution, fencing, tilling of the soil, keeping it free from debt or injury, the care of country roads and water for the mills, protection of the sick and aged, were committed to the jurisdiction of the "joint families" among whom the soil was divided, and to the larger agricultural communities which grew out of these. Other matters of public duty were allotted to the wealthier landowners and ruling class, with the farmers attached to them for aid and protection, the *céli* or clients—duties such as levies of the necessary armed men for the *tuath*, supplies, pledges for the common well-being, and the hearing of ordinary civil and criminal charges arising in their several groups.

The work of the family groups from the lowest ranks to the highest, and of the groups of associated farmers under their leaders, was subject, if due order was not enforced, to revision by the court of the local king, then of the provincial king, and finally of the high-king. It was necessary, therefore, that through the length and breadth of Ireland there should be unquestioned uniformity in the common code, and that no uncertainty should arise as to what the national law demanded or

allowed in legal disputes, whether between individuals or between neighbouring states.

The method, drawn from very ancient tradition, and evolved by the lawyers, was to develop an elaborate system of social grades and classes, defined by their special legal obligations and penalties in the courts. To each man according to his wealth and position a legal "honour-price" was affixed, which carried with it a definite penalty or compensation in case of crime or offence. It was a system easily understood and practised in petty courts where all law was oral tradition, and where every man's social grade was absolutely known to his neighbours. Its success may be gauged by its universal and unquestioned use.

In this way Irish jurists secured to their people complete and dignified powers of local self-government. When, to the farthest extremities of the island, men in every rank and grade were enlisted in carrying out the common law of the country, no "Peasant Revolt" was ever provoked, and the long fidelity of the ordinary people was assured. The law itself was safeguarded by old national tradition, by a practice familiar to every hamlet and "mansion," by the strictest definition in detail, and by precision in the conduct of the courts. No "Alsatia" or refuge for criminals could arise.

The whole system has for the first time been made clear by Dr. MacNeill's new translation of the earliest law-tracts—*Uraicecht Becc*, "the Little Grammar," giving the account of social grades that was taught in the seventh century when the writing of Irish laws began; *Crith Gablach*, probably of the early eighth century; and *Miadlechta*, in the eighth or ninth (1).

In legal theory the basis of Irish law was the custom of the *féni*,* the freemen of Ireland, which was handed

* "Some passages in the laws seem to divide the free people of Ireland into three stocks or to put three chief stocks at the head of them, Féni, Ulaid, and Galians. The laws of Ireland are always known as 'the laws of the Féni,' their archaic language 'the language of the Féni.' There

down orally by a system of mnemonic verses taught in druidic schools which, however widely scattered, were national and not local.

The classes of "freemen" distinguished by early tradition were originally very simple—one rank of king; two of the ruling nobles; and below them the "men of worth" or citizen farmers, whose position depended on ownership of land, even to the man who possessed but a share in a plough-land and a plough. Outside these recognized ranks was the underworld of workers without the status or honour-price of the *nemith*. One document alone—*Miadlechta*—attempts to give a sort of grouping of the unfree in nine grades, which, however, seems to be no more than a list of ungraded classes ranged apparently under no principle of classification. Even in the seventh century the teaching on the social grades was not finally fixed, and in the laws we see evidence of many changes in both lower and higher ranks, as the new classification developed with the growth of agriculture and wealth. The movement, however, can be traced in its broad lines. Many perplexities beset the jurists themselves in making their lists, bewildered as they were in the attempt to align nobles and farmers respectively into seven artificial degrees to correspond with the seven recognized ecclesiastical orders. According to an early dissertation:—"Whence come the divisions of orders of a *tuath?* From a comparison with the orders of the Church, for every order that is in the Church, it is just that its like should be in the *tuath*, for the sake of declaration or denial on oath, or of evidence, or of judgment, from each to the other." To obtain the seven ranks, they added to the plain citizen farmers three degrees of minors, down to

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is every indication that Féni is an older name than Góidil, which I take to be an old Cymric by-name for the Irish, meaning 'wild men,' barbarian disturbers of the British heirs of Roman civilization. The Galians may well represent late Gallic immigrants. The Ulaid then may have been Picts or half-Picts, since they are distinguished from the Féni." —(E. MacNeill.)

the infant whose main occupation and description was sucking the end of a hempen rope in its cheek; and completed the upper order of nobles by putting into it ranks of kings. Among the jurists themselves some unimportant differences occur, but on the whole the orders of husbandry and of the ruling class of nobles can be fairly defined.

The freeman of the poorest class living in a "house of low degree"—a wattled booth or cabin, round or square, some seventeen feet in diameter—was legally protected against all injury, defamation, and "driving out"—a phrase which may possibly refer to expulsion from a house, an assembly or public place, or a territory. The precinct round his house called his *maigen*, small or great according to his means, was by law inviolable. Within the precinct slaying, wounding, or quarrelling was an offence against the owner's status. There he could give protection to strangers in the *tuath* if they were his equals in grade, and if he provided for them the ordinary food of their common class till they went "over the border": the crime of "dishonouring" (literally, overpowering) was a word used chiefly with regard to interference with his right to protect strangers. By old custom small landowners tilled, ground their grain, and stored it, in partnership. If four households worked a ploughland each partner had a fourth share of the plough, an ox, a ploughshare, a goad and a halter, with a share in kiln, mill, barn, and cooking-pot. The law known as "farm-law" seems to have been framed for the regulation of such small communities which probably grew out of joint families—little co-operative groups, as we may call them, farming in common. Neighbours who worked the land together gave in advance "fore-pledges" to each other as security against damage which might be caused by the act or neglect of any member of the group. Laws of bee-keeping; of common pasturage; of partnership in water-courses from which they could lead rivulets through the crops to the mill; of fines payable by one

member to another in respect of trespasses, neglects, or the like, were a part of "farm-law."

The Worthies.

Among the "men of worth" or holders of land the lowest grades were those who, with or without their fault, had not "of their own as much as a perch." These were foster-sons and minors—"he whose foot or hand is not in his power," or, as explained in the gloss, "his father has the power of them." Such a boy was known as a *fer midboth*—"a between-house man," "a man of mid-cottages"—perhaps "between dwellings" in the sense of belonging to his father's and to his foster-father's house. At seventeen he came of age, but from fourteen he could swear to trivial fines, when his statement was tested in court by being reduced to some form "in three words," or short sentences, which he was required to repeat after three days without increase or diminution, and was then classed as one "who preserves statement." This system continued for the young man "to the fringe of beard," the age of twenty. As a minor he could probably hold land in some form of partnership, but he was carefully protected against exactions of "food-custom" or "guesting." He was forbidden to invite anyone to his house "until he is capable of husbandry apart, and of taking property," and he could entertain none but his lord, having bound himself thereto, always provided he was subjected to no more than his proper house-custom. More unfortunate than the boy *i mmaici*, "in sonship" or in his father's power, were others in the same group, such as the man *oen cinedo*, "alone of his kin," the solitary survivor of a family with neither land to till nor power to hire any. There are various allusions to these forlorn nobles by birth without possession, with their scanty honour-price, but the number must have been small.

The humblest of the men of better means and standing

was the *ócaire* or "young noble"—a farmer of "seven-wise means" who occupied a *cumal* of land which could maintain his loan of seven cows and their bull, with a rent of one of the cows at the end of each year as interest—along with seven pigs and a brood sow, seven sheep, and a riding-horse. He was competent to be a partner in a ploughland, owning his ox and ploughshare and goad and halter, and his share in a kiln, a mill, a barn, a cooking-pot. His house of nineteen feet was wicker-worked to the lintel with two doorways, a door in one, a hurdle in the other; a bare fence of boards round it; an oaken plank between every two beds. Three "chattels" of kine were his honour-price, because the establishment of his house is not complete, and he cannot guarantee for the full honour-price owing to the smallness of his means. In this as in all other cases we may safely look on all counting of feet for the house, and livestock for the farm, rather as a sort of standard than an exact figure. A small class, as rare as the opportunities were scarce, hired land as well as cows, paying double the render of those who borrowed stock—that is ten "chattels," since the service was for land.

Among these laborious agriculturists the laws mention (not as a legal technicality but as a term of common usage) the "baptismal vassal." He is represented as a man in his innocence, free from theft, from plunder, from slaying a man except on a day of battle, or someone who sues him for his head, being in rightful wedlock, and faultless on fast days and Sundays and in Lents. He was practically one of the low grades, without franchise, and unfit for military service—a good useful tiller of the soil in the eyes of some, while others only saw in him what we might call a "pacifist" of little value to any stirring country. The term and its implication have probably come down from the first Christian age, when the baptized soldier was called to practise in earthly life the virtues of the heavenly citizen.

The poorer tillers of the ground, to quote an old law-

tract, " have not the right to be brought into lordship," or to give security on evidence or oath. Up to this point the food was of stern simplicity—milk, curds, and corn. To the next class was now added butter on Sundays, a *serccol* of condiment, *duilesc* (a sea-weed which is even now eaten dried as a kind of condiment), onions, and salt. The *bóaire*, known as a " vassal excelling vassals in husbandry," held live-stock—cows, pigs, and sheep—in sums of ten, also a fourth part in a plough. His house and out-house were somewhat better than the lower degree, with " proper furniture, both irons and vessels." Ten cows were his capital from a lord, for which he paid as " house-custom " the choice of his yearling stock, and a bacon of two fingers fairly cut, with four sacks of malt, and a measure of salt. Four " chattels " paid in kine were his *díre* or honour-price for offences against his precinct or person; to that extent he himself could be bond, surety, hostage, or suitor.

Here we are brought up against the question of interest for capital, and prices. While the principle of fixed interest due for the lord's loan of cattle is clear, the actual terms of the price are in our present knowledge not easy to disentangle. The standard measure of capital and rent was cattle in their various stages and grades from the young calf to the milch-cow. These values might be defined in terms of silver or sacks of corn. The *set* or " chattel," when the word is used as a measure of value, denotes the price of a *samaisc* or young cow that has not yet calved—that is, twelve silver screpalls or eighteen sacks of corn, or half the value of a milch-cow. The usual unit of price was the *samaisc*, and the fraction in reckoning was the *dairt* or yearling heifer, valued at four silver screpalls or six sacks of corn. Five chattels valued at fifteen young cows—that is, sixty screpalls in silver or ninety sacks of corn—was the normal honour-price for a freeman. Many a farmer who could not give security to that extent, " owing to the smallness of his means," fell to three chattels or less, while richer

agriculturists rose far above it—as far in the ruling class as twenty or thirty chattels, or over two hundred corn-sacks. Dr. MacNeill notes that it is interesting to find (anticipating Arthur Young in the eighteenth century) the measure of corn used as a certain and enduring basis of real values.

There were seven things, said the jurists, by which a man is measured—physique, kindred, land, husbandry, profession, wealth, integrity. To preserve his nobility or "good dignity" he should have both a worthy descent, and sufficient wealth to meet all dues and pledges for the kindred and clients for whom he was security. According to an old Irish law-tract, "what is wanting from each man's means is wanting from his dignity. What is added to his good means is added to his good dignity." The "*bóaire* of excellence" introduces the class of comfortable farmers—his farm about four hundred and twenty-seven acres, house of twenty-seven feet and out-house of fifteen; a sheep-fold, calf-fold, and pig-sty, twelve cows as loan capital, a half share in a plough, a share in a mill so that he grinds for his family and guests, a kiln, a barn; finally two horses. This farmer had for condiment *cainnenn*, some vegetable preserved by salting, sometimes translated as onions or leeks. Since he held the full honour-price of five chattels (unless he forfeited his position by wasting and losing the possessions that gave him "worth") he could take part in the public service by composing small disputes, and giving judgment in "farm law."

The typical prosperous farmer, however, was the "landman," so-called from his property of about seven hundred and twenty acres; otherwise known as the "*bóaire* of adjudication," the "*bóaire* of genus" (probably comfort or good cheer). "A man of three snouts he was: the snout of a rooting hog that smooths the wrinkles of the face in every season; the snout of a bacon pig on a hook; the snout of a plough that pierces (? the ground); so that he might always be ready

to entertain guests, king or bishop or doctor or judge, from the road." The list of implements and furniture required for a practical landowner's house would not be amiss in a "strong" Irish farm to-day. His seven out-houses must be in good order, for there were strict rules for the proper sheltering of the live-stock. His own house of twenty-seven feet must have all the necessaries in their proper places—casks of milk and ale; three sacks, renewed in each quarter of the year, of malt, of sea-ash against the cutting up of joints of cattle, of charcoal for irons; a cauldron with its spits and supports; a vat in which a boiling (of ale) may be stirred; a huge bronze cauldron in which a hog fits; a cauldron for ordinary use with all needful irons and trays and mugs; a washing-trough and a bath, tubs, candlesticks, knives for cutting rushes, ropes, an adze, an auger, a saw, a pair of shears, a trestle (probably for cutting logs of wood), an axe, the tools for use in every season, every implement thereof unborrowed—a grindstone, mallets, a bill-hook, a hatchet, spears for killing cattle. He had full ownership of a plough with all its outfit. He was bound to have a fire always alive, a candle on the candlestick without fail. Out of his abundance he had butter and condiment every day, and every second day salted meat. In his mill he could grind not only for his household but for others. On his broad pasture and tillage grounds he kept twenty cows and two bulls, six oxen, twenty pigs, four housed hogs, two brood sows. His saddle-horse was adorned with an enamelled bridle. He and his wife of equal grade had each four costumes. Heavy penalties were inflicted for disturbing or invading his house or lands: five chattels for going over his enclosure without leave or for breaking open his door; a cow for gazing into his house; fines for taking a handful of thatch from it, or an armful, a half-truss, a truss, besides restitution of the thatch; also for thefts of wattles and door-posts; penalties for stealing out of his garth or using it for stolen goods. Grinding without leave in the mill of a landman was reckoned at

five chattels with forfeiture of the meal that is ground without permission; and honour-price if his guests have to fast.

This detailed description of the prosperous *bóaire's* house leaves to us a typical example of the industry and abundance of the farmer in the old Irish world. The houses, mostly of wood, were costly, as we may judge from the heavy prices charged by famous builders of the seventh century, when the distinguished wright Gobban Saer was reproached for the high prices and the excessive wages he extorted (2). They were adorned with carving, and fitted out with furniture according to law—beds and pillows, couches and skin-covered cushions, vats and pots (elsewhere we read of a head-bathing basin), sufficient candles and fire. The beds seem to have been fastened to the wall with two posts supporting them in front, and the wall padded with rush or straw for warmth and comfort. On the walls were racks furnished with choice vessels in various metals, or of no less costly wood with ornamental carving of red yew "upon the entire of it."

Our knowledge of the fittings of a landowner's house comes chiefly from the legal penalties inflicted by the earliest laws for damages to his possessions—mainly it would seem at festive entertainments not unlike those familiar to Irish landlords in the eighteenth century. Fines for guests breaking or harming furniture or valuable articles were determined by the most exact equity. The host was held responsible for everything being in its proper place—gold and silver and bronze vessels in their racks, and troughs and benches in their right position on the floor. If anything in its right place was injured it was at the peril of the excited guest; anything out of its place, however costly, was on the responsibility of the untidy host, who was denied all redress. A strictly equitable law decreed that guests might sit or lie in the alcove on the two-posted bed, and injury to its lower parts was exempt from penalty; but there were fines for tearing wisps from a padded wall or bedstead or pillow,

for throwing upside down, or for doing injury to a bed at a height above the level of the head—acts which showed wilful violence. In the winter, when the loss of the bed caused more discomfort and was harder to make good, the penalty was doubled. If a kiln was damaged no charge was made for its implements, or for threshed corn, lying on the floor, since these were not in their proper place. There were the same equitable provisions in the case of *díre* or honour-price for every out-house and its tools. For example the fine for a hatchet was in usual times twice as much as for a bill-hook, but in time of fencing the fine for the bill-hook was doubled to meet the owner's necessity.

The rich proprietor had his enclosed garden for vegetables and fruit, his lawn or pleasure-ground, his field of sanctuary or protection. For a *bóaire* the *maigen* or private precinct was symbolically fixed at a circle round the house as far as the cast of a spear. The radius was doubled for each successive higher grade, so that the precinct of a king of many *tuatha* had a radius of sixty-four spear-casts, but in no case could the area extend beyond the owner's private land. Nor could it be made a centre of disorder. He was forbidden to shelter a "multitude" of refugees, the utmost limit being twenty-seven; nor might he give protection to a person fleeing from lawful authority, or to a man who refused to answer a suit of law by the plaintiff. We have a picture of a great lord's grounds in the later story of the "Settling of Tara"; "I passed one day," said Fintan, "through a wood in Munster in the west; I took away with me a red yew berry and I planted it in the garden of my court, and it grew up there till it was as tall as a man. Then I removed it from the garden and planted it in the lawn of my court even, and it grew up in the centre of that lawn so that I could fit with a hundred warriors under its foliage, and it protected me from wind and rain and from cold and heat" (3). Verses of the Old Irish period record a sufficient standard of well-

being—" Good are their houses, rich their threshing-floors, large their families, many their well-born, pleasant their beds for couples, complete their wagon-harness, their gifts are herds of cattle, few their undesirables." Or again in the ideal character of a noble—" Good is his householding, firm his mind, great his strength of judgment proportioned to the greatness of his possessions " (4). The " Instructions of Cormac " indicate a suitable standard of manners—" I did not deride old people though I was young, I would not speak about anyone in his absence, I would not reproach, but I would praise, I would not ask but I would give, for it is through those habits that the young become old, and kingly warriors " (5). The triads add their aphorisms : " Three rude ones of the world : a youngster mocking an old man, a healthy person mocking an invalid, a wise man mocking a fool ; " " Three fair things that hide ugliness : good manners in the ill-favoured, skill in a serf, wisdom in the misshapen " (6).

From lower to higher rank the *bóaire*, distinguished in law by possession of land, might rise to a very considerable affluence and public importance. But though the word *aire* implied a noble rank, not every *aire* could rank in the higher class as a *flaith* or " ruler." The *bóairig*, " the men of worth," were not necessarily of three generations of noble birth. A *bóaire*, lord of unfree clients, might be very rich in cattle and houses and land, but those whose franchise he had bought, however numerous and valuable they were in accumulating his wealth, did not count to him for " honour " : they had sold their standing as freemen in the courts, and were useless to support his evidence or oath. The wealthiest of the *bóairig* was the *fer fothlai*, " a man of withdrawal," because he withdraws somewhat from the position of the *bóairig*—that is, the surplus of his live-stock that his own land cannot bear and that he cannot sell for land he gave out in capital to secure clients, even while himself remaining client to another. His returns were paid in seed, " for

a vassal is not entitled to malt until he be a lord." Not being of noble descent the *fer fothlai* could claim no hereditary right to enter the ranks of the ruling class; but according to the old Irish principle that "a man is better than his birth," he had the opportunity which runs through all Irish law for the man of ability and industry to enter the rank above his own. "The highest is he who has clients;" and the *fer fothlai* only needed to amass double the possessions required for the lowest rank of noble, so as to lend stock not only to *doer-chéli* but to a sufficient number of *soer-chéli*—clients who had not sold their honour-price, or whom he enabled to redeem it. Then with eight chattels for his honour-price, twenty-seven feet his house, seventeen his out-house, four his guest-company, he could take his place among the *flaithi*, or rulers.

Another great man on the border line was the *aire cosring*, "a noble of constraint," or "the noble of a kin" who had accepted him as chief, and "he makes speech for them." To compel them to obedience he provided a pledge to king and synod and craftsmen, of silver or bronze or yew, to the value of five chattels. Nine chattels his honour-price; his house of thirty feet with out-house of nineteen; and five persons his guest-company.

The Flaithi, or Rulers.

Thus the bridge was built for the passage of the "men of worth" into the ranks of the highborn and chief counsellors. The *bóaire* was classed according to his possessions in land; but no early law-tract lays any stress on the ownership of land by ruling nobles. The *flaith* had to prove his father and grandfather and their wives to be of noble race. He had to stand at the head, not only of *doer-chéli*, but of *soer-chéli*—clients who had retained or had bought back the right to exercise their independent franchise in the same court as himself, and supported him in all public duties whether in law-courts,

in assembly, or in arms. According to a tract of the eighth century he "defends the rights of his vassal-clients (*céli*) in civil claims, in justice, in public law, in treaty law, in whatever touches their honour. . . . He is well grounded in the body of law relating to the family, the state (*tuath*), the ruling nobles, the church, public administration (*rechtge*), and interterritorial compacts (*cairdde*)." Every *flaith* or ruling noble from the lowest rank upwards was bound to have an instructed knowledge of law as his first public obligation, and the schools of law were probably open to them.

Déis, a term used only in relation to a *flaith*, meant the rule of a lord in its widest sense over a body of clients, collectively called by a word in the singular *déis*. In course of time, however, the word *déis*, like *tuath* and *trichacét*, appears to have been loosely used for the land under a ruler. Four kinds of *déis* or rule belonged to the lords: (*a*) the hereditary protection of the *tuath*, or his military authority, including whatever office he held in command of its forces; (*b*) his *doer-chéli* or clients of vassalage; (*c*) his *soer-chéli* or free clients; (*d*) his *senchleithi* and his unfree tenants, that is, probably, old retainers who were bound to the land—"cottiers," and *fuidre* who were not so bound—all doubtless men of the older race, cultivators of the demesne, whose claims did not come into the common courts, the *aire* himself being lord and judge over them.

The lowest grade of *flaith* was that of *aire désa*, leader of the *déis*. If he became client to a superior lord he could claim the loan of capital to the value of six *cumals*, paid for in food-provision, and in entertaining the ten married couples whom the lord might bring with him on visitation from New Year's Day to Shrovetide. His house of twenty-seven feet with an out-house must be in a proper state as to furniture and entertainment and rectitude; with eight beds and their furnishing, drinking-vessels, cauldrons, the full supply of a noble's house, the work vessels including a vat. Also a bed for his foster-

son and his foster-brother, for man, wife, son, and daughter. He himself possessed a suitable saddle-horse with a silver bridle, four horses with green bridles, and a precious brooch; and his lawful wife, suitable to him in rank, must have an equal outfit. He enjoyed the lucrative privilege of malting, but under the most stringent rules both as to the malting-house and every process of the work, and heavy penalties if the house were unfit or the malt defective. Ten chattels were his honour-price—five in regard of his own house and five in regard of the five houses in vassalage—so that he could make oath, give bond, surety, hostage, be suitor or witness, to that amount, always provided he do not waste or diminish his nobility in regard to its means small or great, lest he be cast out of his rule. It is probable that horse-training—classed in a law-tract among what were regarded as liberal professions—may have been a profitable occupation for the less wealthy of the noble classes. The retinue of the *aire désa* to the assembly of the *tuath* was seven.

In the sixth century there were probably only two grades of ruling nobles, the *aire désa* and the *aire túise*. A new grade was interpolated in the seventh century—the *aire échta*—a special military officer or sort of sheriff, who had the duty of punishing a homicide on any member of his *tuath* by a member of a neighbouring *tuath*, apparently under treaty law; but this distinction, disputed as a rank in legal status, disappeared. Other additions remained. The *aire ardd*, "high noble" or "right noble," had twenty clients, ten of vassalage, and ten free *céli*. Fifteen chattels were his honour-price, five for himself and the wealth of the house, and ten for his free clients. He had a retinue of seven in the *tuath*, and could carry twenty married couples with him as part of his due rent on the spring guesting. Yet higher was the *aire túise*, "leading noble," leader of his kindred, with an honour-price of twenty chattels, at all times ready to pay without surety or borrowing; for this he was valid

in the *túath* for pleadings, affirmations, pledges, hostages in treaty-law across the border on behalf of his kindred, and in the house of his lord the king (for the *aire túise* and the ranks above him could become clients to none less than a king). He was lord of twenty-seven clients, fifteen of vassalage and twelve free, from whom he had as house-custom summer-food, and in winter four cows and five steers and six yearlings with their fixed "accompaniment" of bacon, malt, wheat, and other provisions. From the king he had capital of eight *cumals*. Apparently he went in state with his twelve glittering horse-bridles, one of them gold, the others of silver. He had free clients for his company, a retinue of eight in the *tuath* and six in private. He had not to beg for fighting-men since by his full claim he could levy from his own following. At home he had deer-hounds for himself and lap-dogs for his wife. In his house of twenty-nine feet he had proper sets of furniture, eight beds and six couches, both cushions and rugs and irons and bronze vessels, and a cauldron worthy of his state which would hold a beef and a bacon hog. The farm had to be equally well provided. In "guesting" time he might carry round thirty married couples among the clients who furnished as interest for capital his food supply.

The next rank in nobility was the *aire forgaill*, with the significant title "noble of superior testimony," on the principle that the authority of each witness was measured by his grade. With his retinue of nine in the *túath*, and seven in private, his forty clients, twenty of vassalage and twenty free, his fifteen chattels of honour-price, his nine *cumals* loaned by the king, "his worth was nobler than the others." He lacked nothing in the size of his cattle, the splendour of his horse-bridles, his apparatus of husbandry for every season, the pedigree of his wife, and the wealth of the rich embroideries and magnificent ornaments of their state. In course of time this rank was subdivided into three grades; the lowest grade of *aire forgaill* is the oldest, for its honour-price of thirty

chattels is the same as that of the *aire forgaill* or "noble of superior testimony." His splendour fitly closes the full ranks of the *flatha* as they appear in the early eighth century (7).

One remarkable order is found in a single law-tract *Uraicecht Becc*, the *tánaise ríg*, the "second of a king," "whom the *tuath* expects to succeed the king" He had five clients over those proper to the *aire forgaill*; a retinue of ten in the *tuath* and eight in private; ten *cumals* his capital from a lord; thirty chattels his honour-price; amplitude of great cattle, with full number of horses, apparatus for every season, a wife of worthy degree. No definite statement is made as to his qualifications of wealth, nor as to his rights and privileges, which may indicate that the grade, appearing in only one list, was not of tradition, but new-made. In the Annals the *tánaise ríg* first appears in the thirteenth century.

The Family.

The woman's interests were not beyond the outlook of the lawyers, whose tradition in fact included Bri Ambiu, a legendary woman jurist (8). "Every woman who is contracted in marriage in the usage of the *féni* is entitled to her share and that she find her lawful partnership awaiting her." Where the wife was equal in wealth and kindred and owned property in her own right she was "capable of making contracts regarding wealth." There was endowment on both sides with land and cattle and household goods, if they were equally free and lawful in condition of marriage—and this is the wife who is called "wife of co-lordship." The contract, however, of either husband or wife without concurrence of the other was no contract, except such contracts as benefit their common weal—providing gear of husbandry, renting land, collecting winter-food, etc. Every contract must be without concealment, properly made with good conscience, and due consultation as to

what was bought or sold, without disadvantage to one or other. If it be mutual choice to separate, they share according to right, with lawful division of land and cattle and corn, or in house-keeping in such matters as corn and salt meat and feeding and fattening. A proportion was due to the woman of fleeces and bundles of flax, and woad, and handwork of wool combed and spun and woven into cloth. *Lámthorad*, or "hand-produce," still in use, means the stock of home-spun yarn, regarded mainly as woman's produce. The woman had her own honour-price. Invitation of guests, feasting, was the right of either party according to their respective dignity. She entertained half of the guest-company allowed by law to her husband—invitations under fixed rules of rank and of due periods. When the whole lawful company was present, no other person had a right to demand entertainment. Succession through a female ancestor was lawful when there was no survivor of the paternal *derbfine* or kin. During minority the son was subject to his mother, the foster-son to his foster-mother—perhaps a remnant of matriarchal custom. The son could inherit for life from her, but when he died half the inheritance reverted to the joint family.

There was a particular aspect of ancient Irish marriage laws, a survival or revival of earlier laws, which legalised marital connections not lawful according to the law of the Church. A man might by this law take, besides his principal wife, a concubine, with similar arrangements as to their several property. The second wife had to pay the honour-price of the first. The man had to pay bride-price to the woman's father, half his honour-price. The two might separate by mutual consent, with equal endowment at parting, exempt and free, without malice. Contractual connections of this kind were originally from May to May, and if the separation took place before May, the woman was entitled to a maintenance allowance till the next May when the contract expired. She had on separation also a right to a proportionate share of the

common goods strictly defined, with certain allowance "if she be a great worker." Dr. MacNeill suggests that perhaps prejudice against marriages in May arose from this custom. A legal provision is found in a mediæval manuscript that "a woman is borne free in respect of her jealousy so long as she be a legitimate wife and that her jealousy have a lawful occasion." Other marital relations, by abduction, stealth, etc., were in a similar way brought under penalties of law—bonds that can be untied and that are not proper to bind; such as a woman's bride-price given in concealment from the father, whose right it is; a contract without the concurrence of the heads of kin that are proper to do with it; contract of adoption made without concurrence of the kin that would have to sustain it. Under the *féni* "rules of lasting and unlasting," the bride-price of a woman who was "a changer of husbands" diminished at every fresh adventure of contract.

The rearing of the children was regulated by law, whether it should fall to the father or the mother. The interest or duty of the kin was thus secured, and every provision was made not to throw out waifs on the world. A father could cast out of his inheritance a son, and contract with another to maintain him in his old age; but if he had not himself treated his son fairly, if it was "a son to whom his father gave special hatred," he could not be disinherited for failure to maintain the father. A father's consent was necessary to the son's contracts, unless the "dutiful son" was in fact maintaining his aged parent; in that case he had power of contracting, but not to the detriment of the property of the joint family. Nor was he bound to maintenance unless necessity had compelled the father to make away his property. Special instances are given of wrong action by the father, as for example to alienate the son's goods so that he has nothing by which he can make his livelihood. In this time of stirring agriculture in fact the son's position gained in freedom and he was allowed to make

contracts of his own, which were for the benefit of the property—renting land, taking separate status under the law of joint husbandry, combining for co-tillage, paying bride-price for a wife of equal kindred.

It is evident from the early laws that not only the humbler *bóairig*, or "lords of kine," but the ruling nobles, who had clients and vassals under their authority, were themselves agriculturists. These agrarian magnates owned cornmills, ploughs and ox-teams, milch cattle, sheep and swine, horses for work as well as for the chariot and the saddle, and stocks of poultry. Like the patricians of the Roman Republic, they were expected to know the law and practise it in their assemblies. An evil reputation hung round the memory of Dubthach, "king of the Deeies of Brega," whose habit it was to refuse wages till an extra month had been served: "he it was that as against a year's hire and stipend [always] contrived to have another month" (9). It must never be forgotten with regard to the lords of the governing class that, although they held land, it was not with the same idea of property which exists to-day (10). They had no power of eviction. Their authority was rather political than personal.

The elaborate orders of rank find no mention in ordinary legends and poems, where these class divisions never appear; they were certainly not considered a matter of social distinction, as modern communities might suppose. Nor were new grades of "worthies" and "rulers" created by the well-known meticulous pedantry of Irish scholars, who loved to define and classify everything. The jurists were in the closest contact with the people, with full understanding of the details of their common life, and inspired by a strong national spirit. The sub-division of classes marked by honour-price so as to establish each man's status in the law-courts, however complicated it may seem to us, was no needless or senseless

work of lawyers out of touch with reality. In a society where by ancient custom each class was allotted its exact measure of public duty and public rights, and its legal protection and compensation in case of accident or crime, it was necessary amid increasing wealth and growing industries to provide for finer distinctions in the law. A handy rule was needed to ensure that in every petty court, and in every kingdom, there should be the same measure for the value set on each man's oath or evidence or crime. When treaties were multiplied between the *tuatha*, and penalties or compensations had to be adjudged across the borders, or even carried on appeal to a distant court, a universal rule of guidance, based on oral tradition valid for the entire country, secured a uniform system of national law.

The jurists of the central court were, as far as tradition tells, chosen for their distinction and ability from courts of the lesser kingdoms, where they had been in immediate touch with local agricultural life and knew all its problems. Out of their traditional and personal knowledge they developed a system of law singular in its time. One code, the national law of Ireland, covered the whole area of the country, and was accepted without conflict by all the hundred or so of petty kingdoms. No recalcitrant corner of the land remained as a refuge for criminals. And through the centuries to come there was never a revolt by any class, or in any region of Ireland, against the common accepted law of the whole people.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER X.

(1) P. 190. Eoin MacNeill: "Ancient Irish Law: The Law of Status or Franchise" (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16), pp. 265, 281, 311. These early law-tracts, re-translated by Dr. MacNeill, remain the foundation of any exact study of ancient Irish Laws. The details in this chapter are taken from this work of Dr. MacNeill's except in cases where a quotation is noted as coming from another source.

A complete outline of the system is given in "Celtic Ireland," chap. VII, "Political Framework of Ancient Ireland."

(2) P. 198. Plummer: "Lives of Irish Saints," II, 9.
(3) P. 199. *Ériu*, IV, pp. 125 *seq.*
(4) P. 200. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," Nos. 55 and 54.
(5) P. 200. Kuno Meyer: "Instructions of Cormac," p. 17 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XV).
(6) P. 200. Kuno Meyer: "The Triads of Ireland," Nos. 82 and 84 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XIII).
(7) P. 205. See, for the supposed servants and following of a great noble, the fabled list in "Silva Gadelica," II, 100–101.
(8) P. 205. This account of the position of women is not included in the early tracts, but occurs in the laws not as yet adequately translated.
(9) P. 208. "Silva Gadelica," II, 526.
(10) P. 208. Dr. MacNeill indicates a paper by Mr. W. F. Butler in an early number of *Studies*. In his own writings he constantly emphasizes this fact.

CHAPTER XI

HONOUR-PRICE AND LAW-COURTS

In the ranks of the freemen lawyers give with great precision the dependants of the farmer, his retinue, his acres, his house, his farming stock, and his rents, but the "honour-price" remains with them the one distinctive token of the grade—from the child-minor who could make oath "from needle to *dairt* (or heifer in its first age)," to the highest noble with his honour-price of three hundred and sixty silver screpalls or two hundred and sixteen sacks of corn, and even to kings themselves. The old jurists showed their sense of its fundamental importance by giving to the treatise on status and honour-price the first place in the earliest written collection of the code of *Senchus Mór*. On this system of "honour-price" the entire agricultural life of the country was based. It was the ruling guide in every court great or small for the practical decisions of justice; a method skilfully adapted by the jurists for use among a people whose law was traditional and unwritten, and administered by the local occupiers of land in small country courts (1).

In the custom of the *féni* the freeman was distinguished by his right to sue in the law-court, to give oath and evidence, pledge and hostage. His honour-price, the mark of citizenship, was therefore exactly related to these duties and privileges. It was assessed according to the wealth in cattle or goods which he normally held, so as to ensure that he had always in hand, without any borrowing, means to make good all the legal charges, sureties, guarantees, and pledges belonging to his class and position, as well as his obligations to his kin. A man's

testimony in the law-courts was valid to the extent of his power to pay the full penalty for false dealing, whether in his "evidence" as to what he had seen or heard, or his declaratory "oath" on what he believed to have happened. Where there was no other and determining proof, the worth of a man's "oath" or "evidence" was measured by his honour-price. A noble of superior status, throwing a greater stake into the balance, could "overswear" or set aside the oath of an inferior; but he swore falsely at his own heavy risk, for "the lord who swears what he does not sustain" lost his right over his clients, and with that his whole social position. In the same way the honour-price of a farmer determined the value of his "bond," when to secure the fulfilment of his promise a person was pledged as surety; when in a settlement made between two contending parties his "guarantee" was given on behalf of one of them that the contract should be carried out; or when he gave a personal "pledge" agreed upon according to his rank or order in the state.

The life-price, calculated on the freeman's honour-price, marking his right of protection by his people, was evidently the ancient protest against primitive savage customs of murder-reprisals—a declaration of public law against private vengeance. The "life-price" of a man was recognized as a debt to the whole community—a third of the fine went to the chiefs and overlords who had lost a liege, and who had to incur costs in making recovery and in administration of the property levied; a third was given to the hosting who made the levy; and a third to the *derbfine* of the slain. "Body-price" was charged against the man who caused disfigurement, injury, or defect.

In every dispute the status both of the offender and the offended was made a part of the charge and the sentence. Where wrong was done to a freeman by act or omission or as accessory, the offender was in most cases held liable to three kinds of reparation. *Smacht*

was a penalty measured according to the nature of the offence, a sort of punitive damages, decided by the extent and character of the injury without reference to social status. *Aithgin* or restitution may be looked on as the material damages suffered. Honour-price—*eneclann* or *lóg enech*—was paid for what we may call moral damage, in regard of the humiliation of the sufferer; a fine for which the word *díre*, or "paying off," was also used, so that *díre* had the meaning both of payment in excess of restitution and of honour-price. The fine might amount to the entire honour-price of the man offended, or to a half, a third, a fourth or a seventh. By tradition of the *féni* in every grade the *díre* or honour-price in case of a man's death was to go to his son or daughter, unless the son as a defaulter from filial duty was only allowed a fourth. Compensation was strictly allotted for all bodily hurt. In very early times a man who wounded another was compelled to keep him and his sick attendants in his own house and at his own cost till recovery was complete. But this was changed before the laws were written. According to these the shedder of blood was bound immediately to escort or bear the wounded man "over gory sod into a high sanctuary with protection that protects against sudden wave of throng." He was to be carried to "the station of the *tuath*," which seems to point to a public infirmary. "By body and soul" the wounder swore to provide a bed approved of by the doctor, linen, and full attendance of a physician, and gave hostages that he would furnish the "sick maintenance" required by law according to grade or honour-price—all these "until final cure in fore-health, in after-health" —a legal period according to the wound. In hospital a poor man could claim that his mother should be set to nurse him, and both were furnished with the food of their own class, milk and curds and corn. The richer patient could according to his grade demand a certain number of attendants, and the condiments customary at his table. A woman-guard for the sick man, or his

son, had the allowance of his particular class. Administrators or envoys were maintained at half the price of their lords unless, in recompense of the goodness of their work, provision was made for them by the lord himself; not, it would seem, based on their own wealth or rank, but on their place as deputies and his recognition of their services. Every craftsman, whether under lay or ecclesiastical rule, had half sick-maintenance according to the degree of his employer, since each clerical grade was calculated according to the corresponding lay grade in the *tuath*. Three exceptions stood out from the general rule: a king of over-kings, a king scholar, and a hospitaller, were without sick-maintenance, owing to the complexity of the problem, the "most difficult" question, according to the jurists, being to ascertain the expense if they were treated in their own homes. To these were added a smith, a wright, a wise man (probably the *ollam* of the *tuath*), and an embroideress: "for someone is necessary to perform the function of each of them in his absence, and that the earning of each of them may not fail in his house."

The principle of honour-price was a protection to the poor as well as a check upon the rich. For example if a member of a humble farming group needed a loan, or to pledge his credit, he might endanger the welfare of his *fine* or kindred by making a debt beyond his power to pay, which would then fall on them. The law therefore ruled that the member of a *fine* could borrow up to his honour-price, which was secured by his possessions; but for any credit beyond that value he must first ask formal leave of his legal family, without which they were not bound by his debt and could not suffer injury. Thus if he failed to fulfil a pledge given on his behalf he could not involve his kin unawares in his liabilities; not only was he condemned to carry out his promise, but to pay interest on any loss incurred during the delay, to redeem the pledge at a high cost, and if necessary to give a civil hostage for due performance of his obligations. In the

same way a wealthy lord who became guarantor for a neighbour's discharge of some special duty or liability could not give a warrant beyond his honour-price; his kinsmen within specified degrees, who might be made responsible for his default, were thus certain to find in his possessions full security for the debt.

It was customary to give special pledges for fulfilment of a contract, according to the position of the freeman (2). An agriculturist of the *bóaire* class was allowed only to "pledge" cattle, as belonging to his station and pursuits. The noble class of rulers might give some important treasure of silver, bronze, or yew, or well-known personal belonging such as a brooch, a ring, a holiday embroidered cloak or tunic, a girdle, a sword. A rich woman could give her state dress, her needle, or bodkin, or costly work-bag; but for cows or horses, gold, silver, bronze, or iron she must get her husband's leave. Men of peace, who were not entitled to carry arms or take part in a fight, could not give a weapon as pledge—among these were the hospitaller and the *fili*; the pilgrim, or a man who had vowed perpetual exclusion from arms, and held his wattle staff more valuable than a weapon, could lend the staff as pledge and take interest on it. The pledge was a very solemn matter. If the agreement had not been carried out it was forfeited at the end of a month. Five chattels or three cows was its legal value, and for this a cow had to be paid as interest for each outstanding night that the conditions had been neglected and unfulfilled; in addition to that a sum to compensate the lender for the loss of its use; and the honour-price belonging to his dignity if the pledge had been his personal property. The penalties of wrong fell indeed heavily on the wealthy. Values were so carefully reckoned that while the poor man paid no more than the exact price, there was added to the ascending ranks of the richer a series of fractions which increased the calculation of their fines. Throughout the laws we may trace an underlying sense of equity, and of the higher demands of obligation and honour

which were required at every increase of wealth and position.

A freeman might lose his franchise and honour-price in many ways—by selling his land so that he had no property but cattle, which he grazed on the land of others; by madness; by giving false testimony, neglect of bond, going beyond a hostage, or in other ways "betraying his honour." The noble who "eats theft and pillage" lost his honour; or one who vowed his perpetual pilgrim-staff and who speedily turned again to his own will; or who protected an evader of the law; or did not yield judgment or due to man—"such a one is not entitled to judgment or due from man." Honour was also lost by the woman who steals, who reviles (*lit.* carves) every plight, who betrays without recantation, who slays, who refuses every plight, the harlot of a thicket. In all cases "defamation," insult, ridicule, and satire played a great part if the accused man made no defence of his honour: "riders of poetry" were engaged to recite lines defamatory to a man's kinsfolk and descendants. Even a "mansion" or *dún* (a circular earthwork with its stockade surrounding the dwelling of king or noble) notorious for crime was shut out from *díre* or honour-price—the house of theft and plunder, of kin-murder, where son had expelled father, or which lay empty to the danger of the neighbourhood, and so on. The Church was not exempt: a degraded bishop might become an *aibilteoir* or a *deorad Dé* (the latter does not mean "pilgrim"), and his place as bishop given to the head of a Latin school, his equal in rank.

A man degraded by partial deprivation of his honour-price was supposed to have fallen into the next lower grade. He could however recover his old position by restoring his "worth"—the conditions on which his "honour-price" depended—according to a fixed scale of payment. The king or noble had to buy back his position in the community by increasing the number of his free clients of full franchise, the farmer by providing

the fixed number of cows, or by recovering the land necessary to restore his "worth." The wealthy woman was no doubt bound to restitution according to her rank. Women who did penance for their many sins could acquire again the honour-price of maidens of their grade.

A contemporary view of "honour" is given in a dissertation on the laws early in the eighth century. "The honour-price of every grade of these is complete, unless their means fail, that is, provided they fall not in the seven respects in which the honour of everyone falls. What are these? His defamation, to bring an accusation against him without giving a pledge for his honour, false witness, to give a false character, evasion of bond, default of suretyship, to forfeit his hostage in a matter for which the hostage has been given, defilement of his honour. What washes away from one's honour these seven things? Any filth that stains a person's honour, there be three that wash it away, soap, and water, and towel. This, first, is the soap, confession of the deed before men and promise not to return thereto again. The water, next, payment for whatever perishes through his misdeeds. The towel, penance for the misdeed, by the judgment of books."

The importance of the division of classes, with honour-price attached to each, becomes clear when we consider the actual administration of law in Ireland by means of widely scattered petty courts with their old tradition of self-dependence.

We have seen that in every *tuath* the king and his court had grave public duties. Other legal responsibilities were given over to organized groups of the people; to the *céli* or clients led by their lord; and to the *fine* or "true family" under its legal head.

LAW-COURTS.

(1) *The "fine" court.*

The court of the *fine*, or "true family," had important legal duties. It preserved the old tradition of a partnership of the kin who held land in joint responsibility but with strong individual rights, minutely regulated by law.

At the top of the scale was the *fine* of kings and rulers, including the "branches that serve them," clients and vassals, "so that lord-family is a name for them all." But among the freemen the *fine* denotes strictly the "joint family" of kinship and adoption—a group descended from a common ancestor in the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth generation. As new generations came forward, either arrangements were made to accommodate the latest group of the "true family" down to the fifth or sixth degree; or the *derbfine* (a legal kindred of four generations) broke up into as many groups as there were families descended from the common ancestor, and the due appropriations were assigned to them according to an elaborate law of inheritance in order of succession. An old quatrain doubtless represents an immemorial tradition, that when there were five households of *fuidir* status (*i.e.* of the subjected people) within the proper degrees of kinship of a joint family, and owners of sufficient stock, they were admitted to the law both in the sharing of liabilities and of profits; only the lowest grades, men redeemed from the gallows and such like, were excluded.

The rules for the "kin" were in principle the same, from smallest to greatest. In ancient Ireland the modern sense of absolute individual ownership of the soil did not exist. "Every person with vested interests is shameless" said the "Instructions of Cormac." Actual property as opposed to secure occupation of land was nowhere prominent in the brehon laws. On the

other hand from the small farmer in a "cabin of low degree" to the lord of a "mansion," the possession of house and land was indestructible, vested in the *fine* or kin, and handed on by law of family inheritance. It was not till Irish law was transformed into English law that the political power of the Irish landlord—his influence over his clients—was changed into absolute ownership of the soil. Within the *fine* land descended from fathers to sons, probably by equal division. But as population in these centuries apparently remained stationary there was no excessive sub-division. When a line of male descent died off the land fell to the king, to be by him divided according to law among the joint family.

The *derbfine* as a corporate body was liable to the *tuath* for certain public duties—for securing their share of the land against pirates and wolves, repairing roads, maintaining fences, fines for damages and trespass on adjoining lands, serving in the king's hostings and assemblies, giving warning of danger, the fulfilment of contracts and debts incurred by any of its members. Each one of these therefore had a direct practical interest in every transaction, every renting and purchase and contract and covenant which might affect the general credit. If a member made a detrimental contract that lessened his value to the kindred, or if he involved their credit by debts for which they were ultimately liable, they could repudiate and annul the covenant. If in any way he violated his obligations to men outside the kindred, his *fine*, on whom his liabilities fell, was bound to expel and proclaim him. No member could alienate any of the property of the family, nor could he leave a charge on his landed inheritance that he did not find on it; his imprudence was not allowed to impair the land or the wealth of the legal family, nor his want of "thrift"—a legal term implying a degree of competence. On the other hand it was clearly to the interest of the whole group to encourage individual enterprise, thrift, and industry, and those virtues were duly esteemed: a man

was free to give away outside the *fine* what he had purchased by his own labour, for within limits he had command of all that he himself gained—" the acquisition of his body." The solidarity of the community was shown by the fact that, if one of the kindred was slain, compensation for his life-price was allotted by law to the *fine* which had suffered the loss of his service.

But though the kin, viewed from outside, might seem to act as a communal unit or corporate body towards the surrounding groups and the state, it had a very different aspect seen from within. Common holding of land found no place there. The oldest laws recognize the division of the soil into separate holdings, fenced off and secured against trespass or injury by other members of the kin. The rules were explicit. Every fence between two owners of the kindred had to be marked, measured, and finished in a month—a ditch, a stone fence, a fence of oak, or a paling. Fines were levied for a bad fence, wandering cattle, and damaged grass. An unthrifty or weak man, unable or unwilling to fulfil his duty, was compelled to fence, or his kindred under penalty of fines to do it for him. Stakes that had perished were restored by appeal to the memory of a competent antiquary, or by old marks—a tree, a tomb, a flagstone, traces of a mound or of water, a track, road, or ditch.

There seems also to have been the separate obligation on each household to maintain their sick and aged parents —a duty frequently referred to in the laws. It was a question that evidently gave rise to great anxiety, and was possibly the underlying idea of fosterage, to which the Irish were so deeply attached that, from the time when it was given a leading place in the introduction to the first written collection of *Senchus Mór*, it was maintained in full strength till the final ruin of Gaelic law in the seventeenth century.

Fosterage was a system strictly ruled by law. There were two kinds of adoption into the *fine*. In one case no fee was paid, no legal contract made, and the foster-

parents had no liability for the offences of the child. In the other case a fee was given according to the grade of the foster-parent and the child, which established a legal connection and responsibility. The entire fee was paid at the beginning of the fosterage, which for a boy lasted from seven to seventeen years. Though a girl paid for a shorter time, from seven to fourteen, the fee paid was larger, probably on the belief that she was less profitable, or less able to maintain later her foster-parents. The charge for a boy rose by degrees, from the son of an *ócaire* at three young cows, to eighteen milch cows for the son of a king; in return food, raiment, care, and education were given. Porridge was the food, oatmeal or barley meal for the children of ruling nobles, wheatmeal for children of kings, with butter, honey, and milk for the richer classes. The fosterling must have two suits of clothes "between threadbare and new," one for everyday, the other in reserve, but whether worn or new without holes—"his skin should not be seen." The sons of ruling nobles were distinguished by dyes of red, green, and brown, and those of kings by scarlet and blue. The work proper to them was taught to sons of farmers, while those of the ruling grades added horsemanship, swimming, casting the spear, and table games; and for the daughters cutting out, sewing, and embroidering of garments. Special arrangements were made for horses for the king's sons. On leaving the foster-child received a gift, which in fact established a contract that he should maintain his foster-parents in old age. It was possible to admit to the *fine* men from an external *tuath*, but Irish, and foreigners from oversea; but the main recruits to a *fine* in distress must have been fosterlings adopted in time of dearth and pestilence. The strict enforcement by every *fine* of care for the sick and infirm by the inheritors of the family farm was the original Irish poor law, and seems to have been accepted and efficacious.

The groups of the *fine*, therefore, from the humblest landowners to the highest were thus responsible for the

administration of the countryside—the poor-law, the settlement of land, its cultivation and fencing, and protection of the intersecting roads; the security of the farming inhabitants and their cattle; and the watch over desolate places, bandits, and refugee criminals—a work of no less importance to the State than that of the nobles, and one that has left a deeper imprint on the instinct or memory of the people, persisting to our own time. Other matters were committed to the charge of another order of courts—that of the richer landowner and the *céli* or clients attached to him.

(2) *The "céli" court.*

From immemorial time the system of a certain free clientship had been customary among all ranks and classes of Irishmen—a system which must not be confounded with the "clients" of Roman law, nor with the "tenants" of later feudal custom. In Irish law the normal freeman was held to have some share or partnership in land, from which he derived his franchise, or right to sue in the courts. Though his share of the land divided among the kin was not his private property in the modern sense, his franchise was a personal right which he could bargain away at will for some special advantage. If from his small or moderate means he could not maintain his position in a law-court, he could sell his "franchise" to one more wealthy, who paid him for it his "honour-price," and further supplied him with loan capital in the form of stock for the farm, at a fixed yearly interest to be paid in rent of cattle and food-tribute rendered to the lord's household—the "render" or interest being strictly limited according to the capital lent. Very rarely a lord gave land as well as cattle, and this land, if the client fulfilled his payments, became his property. There was some process not now known to us of binding or formally establishing clientship; if it was omitted the client had no special liability for failure in his render, and could return the capital at his own option.

The freeman who thus surrendered his right to give evidence or sue in court became a *doer-chéle* or unfree client. He was known as "a tongueless person," whose legal interests had passed over to his "lord," to be by him defended in all emergencies, probably handing over to the client fines levied for damages and reparations, and reserving for himself those attached to honour-price.

The *doer-chéle* was liable for military service in levies for hosting; but the main rent was agricultural—"house-custom" or provisions given in winter and in summer, contributions at certain festivals, *cai* or "coshering," that is entertainment supplied when the tribute was collected, "food-provision" for a certain "number and fewness" of retinue when the lord went "guesting" among his clients. He also owed other reliefs, such as a third of the lord's liability for theft from his guests, a third of his liability for damage done by himself and his company when they went guesting, half the loss through evasion of the lord's dues by his clients. When the lord was called on for public service the *doer-chéle* had to aid in his duty towards the *tuath*, such as attack and defence, and providing public pledges required by the king in course of law.

In deciding the amount of a loan and the credit of the borrower, interest was calculated with rigorous minuteness. From a host of instances two or three may be taken at chance. For the grant of a cow the client had to give refection once a year to four persons. The yearly "house-custom" furnished as interest on a loan of twelve cows was a steer with its legal accompaniments, a measure of bacon, a half-sack of wheat, two bundles of candles of a fixed size—the whole render perhaps a tenth of the value of the capital lent. If the lord asked more than the legal sum the client's kinsmen might impugn it, so as not to be involved in his liability. If on the other hand the client delayed his just payment, a third more was added to his charge, and double payment if he lingered till the lord had to make a demand. If his

render was faulty, for instance if the malt to be supplied by him failed in quality, there were heavy penalties.

But under the most rigid rules the *doer-chéle* never became a tenant under a landlord, nor a vassal in the feudal sense. The contract between lord and client normally terminated on the death of either and did not pass on to the heirs. There was even during life a possibility of separation without detriment to either side, provided both had acted worthily and not "out of contempt." Client and lord in fact belonged to the same social community of landed freeholders, sharing in common rights. The *doer-chéle* could bargain on terms of his own status as holding land. He became a client by his own choice and will. He could renounce his bargain or modify it when he saw fit. As the "joint family" or *fine* was admitted for the older peoples, so also their ancient land customs were recognized: the "*fuidir* of the subsoil," of the older races, was by law competent to separate from his lord on a fair and legal division of their rights as to capital, land, and industry, the *fuidir* bearing away one-third, and leaving two-thirds to the lord. When a client withdrew from his "lord," he was not obliged to leave the land, which remained his own under the protection of his *fine*: the capital lent him was in the vast majority of cases live-stock which could be returned, leaving safe to the farmer his own holding. It was a reasonable provision that if he simply absconded, passing on his liabilities to his lord, his land could be divided by the lord among the kinsmen of the defaulter, who became responsible for his debts.

The *céle* moreover might be at the same time lord and client. He could even on his single holding take to himself a second or third "lord," being only bound by law to give his first "lord" notice of the contract, and forfeit to him the produce of a piece of corn-land. By taking new loans of cattle to stock his land he could put himself into vassalage in three degrees of service to the lenders:—to the *flaith ced-giallna*, lord of first vassal

service; to the *flaith forgiallna*, lord of extra vassal service; and to the *flaith cuitridh*, co-territorial lord. This system, indeed, was not encouraged, for when a man became unfree client to a second or third lord, the maximum amount of capital and render diminished with each successive lord. The client himself moreover might shrink from the possibility of three patrons arriving together on a guesting (3). But the only absolute prohibition laid on him was the same in every case—that the client of a lord in one *tuath* could not become the client of a lord in another *tuath*, unless he had been legally released from his existing contract. Finally the *doer-chéle*, the "tongueless" man who had sold his franchise as well as taking a loan of capital, could, by buying back his honour-price and paying certain legal dues, recover his status of freeman in the courts. He then became a *soer-chéle* or free client with full franchise, independent beside his lord in the courts, and owing only rent for his loan of capital.

Soer-chéli, usually translated "free tenants" were clients whose contract left their franchise and honour-price untouched, and their right to all the privileges of the *féni*. "Free capital" is the legal term for capital lent by a lord to the *soer-chéle*. Their importance was great in the system of government, since no lord could take a place as one of the ruling class or *flatha* without having a sufficient number of *soer-chéli* as well as *doer-chéli* as clients in his retinue, independent men as free of the courts as himself, and not bound to him for judgment. It is calculated by Dr. MacNeill that in his "render" of food-provision to the lord the free client paid yearly about a third of the capital lent, while the unfree client gave something between a sixth and a fourth, making up for the difference by the surrender of his franchise, which left him subject to the lord's judgment in court, and obliged to render him personal services. "The worst part of the law of free capital," according to a law-tract, was considered to be two things—the labour of a

man every third year for the making of the lord's stockade or for his harvest-gang or for a hosting; and "ceremonial homage," or standing up to honour the lord in assembly to which the free clients were probably expected to accompany him. These two indicate a degree of subjection in the free client, and a wounding of his pride.

The higher ranks of the *flatha* or rulers, all above the *aire désa*, were forbidden to become clients except to the king himself. At his demand, however, they were compelled by law to "take his wages" as his *soer-chéli*. The ruling nobles, "socii of the king," as they appear in the Annals—along with certain officers of state—formed his court or *airecht*. They were bound, no doubt, to accompany him to any external assembly, and follow him to battle. Refusals to accept his summons or obey his battle orders would have been practically to dethrone the king. On the other hand no king could have safely defied a revolting or hostile assembly; on his side he had to justify his decision by riding at their head, and facing death unless he won victory.

The system of clientship was thus in full force from the lesser landlords to the highest nobles. Each landowner of some wealth had his court of clients whom he could attract and retain, and who furnished the retinue with which he rode to the higher court or to the field. His dignity depended on their numbers and importance in the law-courts, and his influence over them. His first object therefore was not to overtax the loyalty of the *céli*, but to draw others to his retinue, and by every means restrain his own clients from leaving him for another lord. A lord who failed in his duties to his clients lost all right to their dues: "a lord who does not fulfil whatever obligations he has undertaken; a lord whom homicide makes bloody—for that is 'the outcry of helplessness' in the usage of the *féni*—boasting over his ale, exulting after victory over the members of a lord; a lord who takes away chattels (which he has given as capital); a lord who lies heavy on the property of his client; a lord

who pays theft; a lord who swears that which he does not make good; a lord who makes contract (of clientship) towards a wrongful lord." To justify the demands of the king, and the response of the whole body of the *céli*, the lord must have full knowledge of the law and legal control of his following. So far as the *doer-chéli* were concerned they had to accept his judgment in the law-court. A disputed case with the *soer-chéli* would be carried to the king's court.

The head of each group of clients had to answer both for the internal order of his system, and for its public duties to the *tuath*. The wealthy landowner was bound to be personally the defender in courts of law of all who were under his protection. In case of trouble within or without the nobles had to provide security by a guarantor (*raith*); by hostage (*giall*), who was held to ransom in case of breach; by contingent bond (*naidm*), under which a youth of the defaulter's family was promised as bail and could be held to ransom; by pledge (*gell*), when a person of high rank gave some article in pledge which if not redeemed involved an offence against the "honour" of the person who pledged it, and consequent heavy penalties. All contracts must be made before *urrad* or bailsmen, men of substance whose security was good at law and their evidence accepted; the outlander or alien or unfree could give neither evidence nor bail. The nobles' supply of soldiers, food, and equipment, service in the court, must be adequate; and their contribution to the lord's mulcts and fines, and to the ransom of any of his house who might be taken as hostage; also in avenging an attack on the kindred; marching to headland and passes and borders; defence against pirates and horse-thieves and wolves; they took their share when "lords and kings gave pledges on behalf of their kin and unfree clients, and every great lord on behalf of his *tuath* pledges for payment of the dues of the churches, the pledges to be released when the tithes, firstfruits, and alms were paid."

(3) *The court of the tuath.*

If local justice failed in any group there was appeal to the weekly court of the king, or to the assemblies. It was the right of the *tuath*, "to which they were entitled," that the king should give service as a faithful judge: "Let him be sound, distinguishing (fairly), and upright between weak and strong . . . let him be a man enquiring after knowledge, let him be steady and patient." These were "the sustaining means" of a true ruler over his *tuath*, and he cannot violate them by falsity or overmight. "The three great falsehoods" (interpreted by an old gloss to mean the falsehoods of a king) "that God avenges on every *tuath*: remuneration of a false bond; rendering of false witness; false judgment for reward." It was a reasonable provision that the king, though he be a judge himself, must have a judge sitting with him in court for all the complicated business of his office. To deal with the crimes and disputes brought before him (4) he had to know "the great wealth of land-laws," the valuation of lands by measure, the extension of boundaries, the planting of stakes, the division among co-heirs, the summoning of joint vassals, the law of (entry for) possession with chattels, all joint vassalage made secure that is settled by pledge, the legal fines for fence-breaking, the diminution of forest fruit, the changes that might have happened in the honour-price of farmers in any of their many grades. He had to know too the laws that regulated trial by single combat. It was his business to carry out faithfully the system of public pledges; so that, for example, the people should not be wrongfully pledged by an assembly to which the whole *tuath* had not been summoned; but only the co-nobles.

Thus in each one of the petty kingdoms the due business of the law was allotted to the several groups whose interest and responsibility were clear. To what

we may roughly call the small farming class fell questions such as fencing, by-roads, water-supply, poor-law, and the like. The courts of larger agriculturists and their clients had charge of general order and protection, home defence, and supply to the government. The higher question of the state, revision of judicial work, defence of the territory, and foreign affairs, were the business of the king's court.

Here we can see the value of the old tradition of Honour-price. In every court there was the same plain intelligible code for crimes and penalties, and familiar rules for the country-side in every possible local emergency. National law was, in fact, assured by the work of the old jurists in meeting public needs by aids which everyone could interpret and could justly apply in practice. Under a system so popular, in the best sense, we can understand how for centuries to come the Irish through all troubles held with unabated confidence and devotion to their own law.

It is evident how widespread throughout the country must have been the common memory among the people of their old traditions and laws, and how great must have been its effect in the diffusion of political intelligence, and a practical national faith.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XI.

(1) P. 211. An interesting case of legal compensation and its complications occurs in one of the Cú Chulainn legends; see *Ériu*, I, pp. 125–127.

(2) P. 215. In litigation there were various forms of security: a "bond," when a person was pledged in surety; a "guarantee" by a third party when a secured contract was made; a man's "evidence" was valid to the extent of his honour-price.

(3) P. 225. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 170.

(4) P. 228. See especially the very important old poem given by Eoin MacNeill in his "Law of Status," p. 310 (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c. 16).

CHAPTER XII

THE JURISTS

The jurists of the central high courts were according to tradition selected from the chief brehons of the lesser courts. By their intimate knowledge of local conditions, their sympathy and comprehension, their broad national outlook, and their ability, they served their country well. The old laws, traditional and slowly amended, remain the most remarkable code known in Europe for the protection of a rural community; their relation to popular needs is proved by the unswerving tenacity with which the Irish clung for the next thousand years through all changes and troubles to their native Law (1).

The Law of Nature was a conception of Roman jurists, and was imported into Ireland with Latin learning. The books of Irish law which contained the first writing of teachings formerly oral remained in later times as records of prime authority, and all teaching professed to be based on them. They probably date from the late seventh century.* Some of the earliest books of scriptural standing are now known merely by name, others exist only in fragments. Later treatises followed as jurists rapidly set to work by compilations and theoretical dissertations to interpret, explain, and sum up the material of the schools; but these did not acquire the same authority and were not used as a basis of legal teaching. There may have been many treatises that have not survived, not having been made text-books. It would be purely speculative now to state any number for the law-books existing about 900 A.D. *Senchus Mór*, the chief collection of the oldest Irish laws, may have been written from

* See Appendix, p. 422.

word of mouth at the end of the seventh century, the writer of *Cain Lanamna* being perhaps the first compiler. One of its tracts, *Uraicecht Becc*, the "Little Grammar," held in old time the first place in the collection, and may be dated in that early time. *Crith Gablach* seems to have been written in the eighth century at the latest; a poem at the end of the tract cannot be later than the seventh century. A third tract, *Miadlechta*, "classes of dignity," may be of the eighth-century text-books. By 900 A.D. there was a beginning of "glosses" to translate words of the oldest laws, whose language was then becoming unintelligible.

Even in the earliest times there are evidences that legal teaching was not fixed or rigid, and that changing conditions were reflected in adaptations of the law, such as the addition of social grades, changes in penalties for crime, the dropping of elements in the old system no longer useful, and the making of new regulations. It has been established that any matter which could be made a subject for public legislation was treated as such. All laws were applied to the whole country. No local legislation has been discovered, though such must have existed.

The tradition of the Fathers, however, remained the foundation of Irish law. "What are the three firm stones," said one of the earliest tracts, "which neither right nor judgment nor maxim nor proof (by the law) of nature can loosen? A heavenly offering, which a godly document confirms; a tribute preserved during (a succession of) three persons; an ancient established right older than ancient memory—till the ruin (?) of the world it is fixed in the freedom in which it has been found." Legends were brought forward in grave affairs to assure the people of ancient authority. For example it was told that Amorgen Rathach, owner of seven homesteads, was the first who gave "guarantee at the back of right" in Ireland. Another legend concerned the question of legal property in land and the transfer of the soil by the symbolic act of the new occupant

driving a fixed number of cattle or horses on to his farm. Entry for possession, involving the dispossession of the actual landholder, was either lawful, or a trespass of the gravest kind, and very strict formalities were attached to it. There was an elaborate ritual lasting over thirty days from the formal notice of intention. Ten days after notice the claimant with a witness crossed the border leading two horses, and remained for a day and a night. Ten days later he repeated this with two witnesses and four horses. Ten days later still he took possession, bringing four witnesses and eight horses. A story was told to carry back the custom to past ages by showing it to be as ancient as the time of Conchobor mac Nessa: "Ninnid, son of Mate, of the *féni*, went northward into the territory of the Uluti, himself and two other riders, to visit friends, and they unyoked their horses on land that had formerly belonged to their kindred, but there had been no demand for a share in it; whereupon he whose land it was said 'Take your horses out of the land.' Then the two who were with Ninnid said, 'It is no better claim (?) for us, though we have loosed our horses here, for it was not to claim a share in it.' 'That is not an easy matter,' said the owner; 'it was yours formerly. So they must not stay here.' They knew not till then that the land had been theirs before. They did not remove their horses. Then he whose land it was removed their horses by force. They afterwards brought the case for judgment to Conchobor, son of Ness, and he adjudged an unjust unlawful liability against the man who removed their horses from the land, and levied possession for them in consideration of the said entry." Seizure might not take place between the two Christmases or the two Easters, or on a noble day (perhaps a civil holiday); and privileged animals were forbidden—a new-calved cow; a cow at which a branch was shaken during the milking, or that was coaxed with salt or a dainty mouthful during milking; a cow that was set apart to supply milk for special needs. Entry for possession by a woman, made

with sheep instead of horses and periods covering a fortnight instead of a month, was founded on the tradition of a woman who claimed land, defended by a woman jurist—Ciannacht, whose name is an eponym of the territory of Ciannachta (the southern part of county Louth), in the Fifth of the Ulaid. Sencha, chief jurist to Conchobor, decided against her because she adopted the process with sheep, etc., and forthwith his face was disfigured with blotches. Brí Ambiu (" without kine "), daughter of Sencha, ruled in her favour, and the disappearance of the blotches confirmed the judgment, establishing the law of entry by women.

Again there was a legend to expound the harmonizing of the " Law of Nature " and the Christian law. It declared that the two codes, the Law of Nature (as interpreted by the oral decisions and poems of the *filid*) and the written Christian law known as the *recht litre* or " law of the letter," had in old days been framed into a common code by a commission of three bishops (one of them Patrick), three kings (Loeguire one of these), and three *filid* (among them the converted druid Dubthach).

The supposed anarchy of Ireland has been held to derive from a supposed cause, that the judges, having no armed force at command, were mere arbitrators without means of enforcing their decrees. All historic evidence, however, goes to show that judges, both local and central, held the power of swift and severe punishment, and that the sanctions of law were in effect heavier than the punishments of modern days. Fines were the ordinary penalty, outlawry the most severe. The loss of honour-price deprived a man of every tie to the ranks of his countrymen, whether above or below him, every protection of law. " Fer na damar cert na dliged " (the man who refuses to obey legal decision or to render due right) " is deprived of the ordinary benefits of law "—such is a phrase frequent in the Laws. The criminal lost on the moment all civil rights: the forfeiting of a man's " honour " might involve the loss of everything which

made life endurable. The hostage of noble rank whose lord failed to observe the pact for which his person was security could sink to be a slave; the nobleman who refused justice to a person of less "honour" than his could be outlawed. He had no longer either "lord" or "tenant." No one owed him service or rent; he himself possessed nothing, and could give nothing.

There was discretion in using the full power of judgment. Irish law distinguishes between the simple wrong-doer and the criminal, anticipating, as Dr. MacNeill points out, the principle that underlies the recent English "First Offenders" Act. The wrong-doer became a criminal (*a*) when he refused to be made amenable; (*b*) when he became a frequent offender (*bithbinech*).

The obligation of enforcing law against criminals fell first to the king of the *tuath*, then to the head of confederated states, last of all to the high-king. Many of the so-called Irish "wars," beginning and ending with a single battle, were simply the enforcement by arms of a legal decision in the assembly. A legend tells of the high-king Díarmait in 650 leading his army to the Shannon on the complaint of "an old dame" against king Guaire for the "lifting of her cows" (2): if the story is in a late form and extravagant in its details, it represents the commonly accepted view of the king's obligation to enforce law. Chroniclers, whose habit was to concern themselves only with the aristocrats, whether nobles or warriors or ecclesiastics, and with startling events such as plague, famine, eclipses, an astonishing crime, and the like, did not consider it their business to tell common things known to everyone, such as assemblies, or decisions of law-courts with the following course of the high-king's justice, or to give the cause or meaning of a battle, or explain or account for anything. The Annals merely record the "battle" without its well-known cause. They may tell without comment that a king puts a prince of his house to death. It is only from other sources we can learn that the fight was to carry out

a legal decree, or enforce payment of tribute according to ancient claim and precedent; or that the execution was a judicial act, after trial and sentence.

Traditional law had behind it such a force of popular consent and general convenience that a verdict in the courts became the concern of the whole community. The rigour of formality was extreme, whether in the *tuath*, the province, or the national assembly. A skilled lawyer, whose payment was fixed by law, was necessary. The *brehon* was rather a professional jurist than a judge. A "jurist of the three languages," of the laws, of literature, and of the Latin canons of the Church, was classed in position and honour-price with the higher nobles or "rulers." The "usage of the *féni*" forbade the employment of a judge of whom "falsity is known; one who does not undertake pledge to defend his award; one without substance of knowledge; one who makes award on a one-sided suing without responsive suit." Cormac in his "Glossary" marks the honour in which law was held: "As a great pillar (*tuir*) supports a house, having many arms out of it, thus this world is the house; while the pillar is the truth of natural law, and the many arms are the various meanings and methods of judgment" (3). Evidence in court must be beyond all doubt; "but every man was borne free who brought a substantial complaint before the court." By ordinary civil law testimony or contracts by accredited witnesses were verbal: a grant to a *fili* must be evidenced by a poem, but not in writing. Written evidence had to be given only with an ecclesiastical grant. An oral contract was good at law, "a contract of the lips." "The world would be mad," says an old Irish tract, "if the contract of the lips were no more binding." In giving evidence in a *tuath* certain persons were excluded: a man who has stumbled below his grade; a woman; a co-partner in the case of his co-partner; a hired man in the case of the man who hired him; a cuckold in the case of his wife or her paramour; a man of wrath against the man who was the

object of his wrath; a man of joint lordship against a rival claimant to his office: each man in the matter of his own legal interest, however noble he be, for "partiality impairs integrity." It was illegal to make purchases from persons "not in their own power," or incapable of contracts,—a man for example, from an extern *tuath*, unfree tenants, imbeciles, madmen, and others—neither defective performance nor bad contract nor good contract is made binding on them unless their true competent representatives authorize their contracts. By law certain chattels once given cannot be recovered: (*a*) a gift from spouse to spouse; (*b*) a thing that one has sold; (*c*) a fee paid to a poet; (*d*) a gift to the Church for the good of a soul; (*e*) cattle allowed to stray into the king's land; (*f*) anything from a co-partner, in kinship or in joint husbandry, if the due has been forgiven; (*g*) a fee paid for the service of a reliquary (reliquaries were carried on circuit for the collection of tithe, etc., and used in administering oaths at courts and assemblies); (*h*) a fee paid to a person of any art or craft; (*i*) a grant of capital to an indigent client.

"With the people things go by seniority; with the chief, by qualifications; with the Church, by (degree of) wisdom" (4). The course of justice was laid down by the advice of the clergy, the custom of cities, the equity of poets, the consent of the nobles, the counsel of judges; when conscience and the law of nature required, rules might be amended by just judgments. "Five 'paths of judgment' they are that have to be considered, viz. Truth and Legality, Right and Possession, and the right of Appeal" (5). "Every judge at his own risk . . . to pay the damages of his own false judgment" (6). In the interests of justice a judge, unable to plead in the court where he sits on pain of losing his office and status, was allowed to speak in certain cases—to defend his award; to point out some omission in the conduct of a cause; to argue for a side that would otherwise be unfairly disadvantaged, such as an ignorant against a learned

person, or one of low degree against one of high degree, a man who had retired from civil to religious life, a woman who had no representative to speak for her, or an absentee. Over-eloquent orators were curtailed, and due measure ordered for the Church, the Chief, the Poet, the People, for " until these rules were framed for them, people used to (make) one (speech last from noon till) night in Tara ; therefore subsequently it was by (the chiefs) and the men of wisdom determined to frame for them this proportional rule of ' breathings ' " (7).

The intense Irish interest in the conduct of the courts is shown by the number of ancient " Instructions " or wise sayings attributed to famous kings or teachers or foster-fathers, in which the chief space is given to the duty of those who took part in the assemblies to train themselves for their work by the principles of just government. According to the supposed " Instructions " of the mythical " Morann of the just judgments " (8)—" If a judge thou be, thou must utter no judgment without knowledge ; without bond, that is, taking pledges or binding sureties for fulfilment of the award ; without precedent. Without foundation solid, without bond thou must not lay down. To mercy violence must not be done. Before thou know thou must not proceed. Blind-judging thou must not be. Thou must not be obstinately blind, nor rash. (For bribes emanating) from either great or small thou shalt not consent (one way or the other)." The " Instructions of Cormac " of the ninth century denounce contending against knowledge or without proofs, stiffness of delivery, a muttering speech, hair-splitting, uncertain proofs, despising books, shifting one's pleading, inciting the multitude, blowing one's own trumpet, shouting out at the top of one's voice, swearing after judgment, slow stiff argument, and other oratorical vices. In these critical assemblies there was no tolerance for " a pleading without choice, without restraint, without grasp, without practice " (9). " O grandson of Con, O Cormac, what is good for the welfare of a country ? " " That is plain,"

said Cormac, "frequent convocations of sapient and good men to investigate its affairs, to abolish each evil and retain each wholesome institution, to attend to the precepts of the elders; let every assembly be convened according to law, let the law be in the hands of the nobles, let the chieftains be upright and unwilling to oppress the poor." "It is good for him to have patience and not dispute, self-government without anger, affability without haughtiness, diligent attention to history, strict observance of covenants and agreements, strictness mitigated by mercy in the execution of laws . . . let him enforce fear, let him perfect peace, (let him) give much of *metheglin* and wine, let him pronounce just judgments of light, let him speak all truth, for it is through the truth of a king that God gives favourable seasons."

Kuno Meyer first pointed out the remarkable fact that, unlike all other states in Europe, Ireland at that early time had framed for herself one national law for the whole territory. There is evidence that in ancient times some minor differences in the land laws existed in different parts of Ireland. But variations in custom must in fact have been trifling, for the main principles of the general law remained unchanged. The old tracts admitted no law into their own scope but what was common to all Ireland; and the Law of the *féni* remained the uniform rule for the entire country. At a time when Wales had four codes, and Britain as many laws as it had kingdoms, in Ireland the kingdoms were many, but they were all united in obedience to a common law. We have seen how a deep underlying sentiment of nationality was made effective through a system of common action in which kings in their various ranks became the means of binding the states together under a unified code, so that national law, common in theory, was made common in fact. The brehons as an organized body, steeped in national tradition, with their trained jurists and compilers of the laws and central court of appeal, both knew the learning of Ireland, and shared the deep instinct of the Irish that the

whole people were one community: they preserved for its inhabitants an equal code and a common administration, which very early established the general law of an undivided Irish nation.

The extraordinary vitality of the people at that time, whether in agriculture, industries, learning, art, travel, or missionary enterprise, shows the value of a political constitution in which the race found its true expression—a local life making its full demand on the service and fidelity of the community of freemen, under the inspiration of a wider national faith. Their later story demonstrates the power of law which has vitally entered into the common consciousness of a people. The advance of Ireland in civilization was determined not by a strong lord in the feudal sense, but by general social forces beyond the power of any high-king—the activity of an intelligent and enterprising population, growing in material energy as they grew in spiritual and intellectual vigour. Every king famous in Irish history drew his only authority from being the very expression of the people's life, and instinct with their spirit.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XII.

(1) P. 230. For this chapter see throughout Dr. MacNeill's translations of Law tracts (*R.I.A.* XXXVI, c 16).
(2) P. 234. "Silva Gadelica," II, 431.
(3) P. 235. "Cormac's Glossary," Kuno Meyer's edition, § 1224 (Anecdota from Irish MSS. iv).
(4) P. 236. O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," p. 96.
(5) P. 236. *Ib.*, p. 88.
(6) P. 236. *Ib.*, p. 81.
(7) P. 237. *Ib.*, p. 88. "To the Church, seven breathings with seven words in each breath; to the Chief, three breathings with seven words in each breath; to the Poet, two breathings with five words in each breath; and to the people one breathing containing five words."
(8) P. 237. O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," pp. 142 *seq.* MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 67, 68, 71.
(9) P. 237. Kuno Meyer: "Instructions of Cormac" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XV), pp. 41, 43.

CHAPTER XIII

MONASTERIES AND INDUSTRIES

THERE is an old tradition that Ireland was divided into separate holdings in the time of the high-king Áed Sláine who died in 604 A.D.; and it is likely that a rapid advance of prosperous and extending agriculture, with enclosed farms for pasture and tillage, brought about or accelerated a development in the earlier system of common holding within the joint family. The oldest law tracts show a steady increase in the number of grades, not only among the citizen classes, but also among the ruling nobles. In both cases the additions to the older ranks are made in the upper degrees, marking a new accumulation of wealth. The military age and its warrior kings had passed away, so that the very word *cathir* (Welsh *caer* from *castra*), though still used in its earliest sense of a fortified place occupied by an army, had taken a new meaning, and come to represent a city, an episcopal see, a principal church—in fact a centre of population—"The frequented places of a *cathir* are its floor and its cemeteries and its chief streets and every place where there is a resort of all; the unfrequented in it are its back places and its garths and dark places." The sagacious compiler of the "Instructions of Cormac" in the early ninth century comments on the altered life of the Irish: "Everyone is a roving warrior till he takes up husbandry, everyone is a mercenary till he settles in a dwelling;" and on the duties of the modern chiefs: "Let him foster every science, let him consolidate every peace, let him buy treasures (from oversea)." And the Triads of the same

century give a poet's vision of the forces of the new age : " Three slender things that best support the world : the slender stream of milk from the cow into the pail, the slender blade of green corn upon the ground, the slender thread over the hand of a skilled woman."

Agriculture flourished as war declined. In the law tract *Crith Gablach* (except men of learning, arts, or crafts), every freeman, from the rank of the *fer midboth* upward to the ruling nobility, is supposed to be owner or part-owner of a plough and a water-mill. On all sides fertile soil was reclaimed for tillage, partitioned, mered, and fenced in rectangular strips, by measurements of length and breadth which had evidently been handed down from Gaulish custom—about a hundred and forty-four feet for the long side of the area, and seventy-two feet for the breadth or fore-end. One of the old writers gives twelve " arepennis " or perches to the enclosed area ; this seems to have been a quarter of the " ploughland," or tilled ground which one plough with four oxen, worked alternately in pairs, could normally plough in a season. Holdings were laid out along the roads—the road of the king or the *tuath*, the road of draught, the cattle road to pond or mountain grazing or the like—with the shorter side of the area bounded by the common road or track so that as many of the lands as possible should have access to it. The husbandmen on either side had to fence the way, keep it hewn of undergrowth and cleared and trenched, and clean up sandbeds in time of assembly ; taking as profits for this work a share in " whatever produce comes thereby into the land," and their *dire* for any injury to their fences. Where there was no natural boundary of sea, river, lake, or thicket the landowner had to make his own strong enclosure—a fence of three great stones three feet wide and twelve hands high ; a dyke three feet broad at the top and three feet in the height of the bank ; a fence of timber against oxen and small stock twelve hands high, three bands of wattles in it holding every stake, the stakes firmly hammered into the ground

fairly close together, and a crest of blackthorn on it. This and the oaken fence of the same height, closeness, and completeness, were trespass-proof against cattle. The breaking of a man's stockade was allowed for certain public purposes, as for example, the transport of works for a mill, or of an oaken house, or of a memorial, or of the craftwork of a king's stockade, or to make way for the dead, or pilgrims. In each case leave to break through was "besought, for it is an old maxim in the usage of the *féni*, 'every prayer is soothing,'" or in the old proverb: "Nought is good for which leave is not asked." Every breach made had to be closed by the intruders.

Elaborate rules were drawn up for the valuing of land whether for tillage or pasture, according to its class and quality—firm land, in which every good is good, corn, milk, flax, woad, honey, *roid* (probably some dye plant), and sweet herbs, and which needed no improvement with manure or shell lime; hilly land abounding in small hills, with much water in the hollows and ash-trees exhausting the soil; corn-land of industry—good land, but requiring the axe. Other lands were classed as weak, rough, and shallow, carrying fern, heath, and furze. These six classes of land had all their apportioned value. The values would be increased by conveniences such as the neighbourhood of a road, a woodland, a silver-mine, a boundary stream with fishing rights, a mill-site, mountain grazing, a weir, seaweed, a cow-pond. In the tradition of the *féni* a "cow's land" was a *cumal*—a measure of a little over thirty-four acres—which would sustain seven cows for a year, at the rent of one of the cows at the end of the year. The rent of a *cumal* of arable soil was apparently three cows; the purchase price of the best land was twenty-four milch cows, of medium arable land twenty milch cows, and of an inferior soil sixteen milch cows; of grazing land (not woodland or mountain) according to quality, from twelve to eight dry cows. There was a separate name for

every sort of enclosed land—preserved grass of corn-land in winter; bare grazed winter grass of corn-land; preserved moorland in winter, or damp meadow land; land grazed in summer and left vacant in winter; preserved grass of corn-land in summer; or preserved meadow-land; or summer woodland; land exempt from wounding or fighting, probably set apart for hay. The construction of water-courses to drive mills and supply other needs was directed by law. They were worked in co-operation by groups of farmers; all those through whose land the water was drawn, as well as the workers at the mill, having a right to its use in turn and to a share of the output. No man could refuse to have a water-course drawn across his field to his fellow-husbandman, for "the want of it would be the forbidding of all husbandry"; no difficulty could be raised save at a solitary church, a king's stockade, or the precinct of a tomb.

The summer season was reckoned by the seven months of crops from seed-time to harvest, and the winter-time the five months from harvest to seed-time, without crops. Fines for trespass of cattle were heavier when there were no crops and the cattle grazed, "because living life is worthier than crops"—perhaps a memory from old time when tillage was of small account—and with the practical sense that "grass is renewed in summer, none at all however in winter." Winter grass was precious to keep the kine alive in time of scarcity. "Hoof grazes equally with tooth;" so that cattle at every age were of equal cost in feeding, and "two yearlings graze more than a great ox." The owner of enclosed land counted carefully "the spendings of cattle: the spending of their hoof in tearing up and trampling, the spending of their horn where they wound and rend, the spending of their mouth in taking the grass;" he calculated how long the "final healing" of land rooted up by trespassing animals would take before two horses might be brought on it as a test, and neither roots nor clay adhere to their teeth in

grazing. Rules were made for "common grazing," on land let by the owner, where his own cattle went with the others; but he was not bound by the same reckonings of the various kinds of cattle, fines for injury by dangerous animals, etc., and food-provision for herdsmen.

Like the fertile land, woods were also appropriated according to their value. "The nobles of the wood were the oak, hazel, holly, yew, ash, fir, apple. The vassals of the wood were alder, willow, whitethorn, rowan, birch, elm, *ida*. The under-classes of wood were blackthorn, elder, spindlewood, "white hazel," aspen, arbutus, *crann fir*. The shrubs of the wood were fern, bog-myrtle, furze, bramble, heath, ivy, broom, gooseberry." In the forests the pigs, shut out from the enclosed fields ("for the damage they do is not less than the profit they make"), were kept in droves and fattened for killing when the forest fruit fell.

Outside this wide region of tilled land lay the mountain heights, the heath, the bog, the wilder woods, as "common land" to the people of the *tuath*. Even throughout the appropriated lands certain common rights were allowed the inhabitants for the bare necessities of life, or for the carrying out of urgent public duties (1). For example, in every appropriated wood a right was reserved for the people to the wild animals of the forest, a night's supply of kindling, sticks for cooking a meal, a fistful of nut-gathering, timber for a yoke and plough, for a bier, for a churn staff, hoops for a barrel, a spear-shaft, a horse-rod, a spancel. Anyone might hold a horse-race on the public fair-green. "One salmon of the place" was common property, and one cast of the net in every stream. Also the sea-weed of every strand "not appropriated," the *duilesc* of every rock, the goods washed on it by the wave. Private belongings were subject to the same limitations for common convenience—whetting on a stone, the salt of the hospitaller's house, a chain for a captive for fear of damage, forcible entry into a boat to escape drowning or pursuit by a foe. Other privileges

were allowed by "natural law" to all that stood in need of them—wild herbs for flavouring, the leavings of certain industrial operations, the trial of a horse before purchase, etc. Unmarked deer on the hillside or the waste was fair game: a small fine was exacted for killing marked deer even on the hills, and a larger fine for its death on the green or among neighbours (2). Waifs found in a dwelling, a city (*cathir*), private ground, a roadway, a woodland, a mountain, a strand, or the sea, all carried their own reward to the finder, the greater according to the unlikelihood or the danger of finding. Anything recovered at risk of life from a field of slaughter, the great deep, fire, etc.—"the hero's burden"—became the property of the man who recovered it.

The monasteries took their full part in the general agricultural and industrial development. In the first sternness of their discipline they used neither oxen nor ploughs, and tilled the land by their own digging and labour. A mediæval life of S. Mochuda preserves a memory of change in the sixth century. S. Finan visiting his monastery found the monks digging and carrying burdens of soil. "It is a wretched thing," said Finan, "to make your monks into brute beasts; for it were better to have oxen for ploughing and draught, than to put such torture on the disciples of God." "We have never desired worldly possessions for ourselves," said Mochuda. "That is not well," said Finan, "for the Church to refuse alms and offerings of the secular monks (or tenants) when it gives confession and prayer in return. And let it not be so done henceforth" (3). A certain honourable man also, Lasrianus (Irish Laisrén), compelled him to accept alms from the monastic tenants "and from everyone else who wishes to offer it." Monasteries long maintained their protest against old traditions of a class whose "white hands" never suffered the degradation of axe or spade. They preserved for centuries the memory of abbots and bishops, even of kingly race, sowing, reaping, planting fruit-trees, carrying sacks of corn on their backs

to the mill, working as smiths; of bishop Etchen at his plough; of saints who served by night in herding of oxen and sheep against wolves, and by day in cutting firewood; of the learned S. Oengus at Tallaght with his hard sack for grinding seeds, his kiln a-drying corn, his face changing colour between wind and winnowing chaff. Tales abound of the laborious hewing down of woods and carting heavy logs for building (4), the making of great causeways over the bogs, the entrenching of lands against wild beasts. We are told of S. Moedhoc of Ferns working in the fields with a hundred and fifty brethren (5) —a fine tillage band—when king Brandub came to visit him at the harvest. For a monk's education even till the eleventh century we may see the story of S. Blathmait —" a man most learned in the law of God; and on this account noblemen's sons were sent to him from great distances to learn the principles of justice according to each law, and especially to learn humility. When the youth had been trained in sacred learning, and was now somewhat grown up, he knew perfectly in all humility and patience how to plough, to sow, to reap, to grind, to bolt, and to bake with his own hand for the general advantage of the monks" (6).

It would be wrong to suppose that the monasteries were the creators of the true agricultural life of Ireland because in a time of transition they proved its energetic fosterers. But these centres of disciplined work became before long highly organized and privileged establishments of labour, of tillage and milling, of water-power and winter storage, and in course of time trading markets of renowned activity and wealth. From the time of Patrick land had been granted to them exempt from any taxes of *tuath* or chief or king, so that the *ardrí* himself could neither levy any due nor call men out to hosting. There is a record of two nuns of Sligo who after being baptized by Patrick bequeathed a fifth part of their lands to him, and the king freed it to God and Patrick: in other words he "liberated" it from secular dues and

military service. Since Irish law did not allow eviction the tenants, also baptized, gave their consent: "Lord and tenant granted all this immediately after baptism was given them." Thus the monastery of Drumlease in Leitrim was founded. Two men in Carbury gave land also, and the king Coirpre (son of the great Niall) conferred on Patrick the full dominion of it. Three nuns in Leitrim also granted to him their residence and garden and wood and plain and marsh. One half of this inheritance was owned completely by Cummen, who being joint owner of a part of the property and unable to convey a separate title to Patrick, exchanged a garment of her own working for a horse valued at three cows, which was sold and the price added to her gift. Two grants of land to Patrick by Crimthann king of the Laigin are also recorded (7).

Though these records belong to the ninth century they show that it was commonly understood by old Irish law before the Norse invasions that kings of various degrees could make grants of land, and a chief with the consent of his king; that the consent of the tenants was required; that land could be inherited, bequeathed by testament, and bought and sold, including the rights over persons living on it; that two persons could be joint owners of an estate, and that women could hold land in their own right. The early ecclesiastical foundations, which were based on the power of the high-king to make grants of land throughout all the territories of the subject kings, came in fact nearest to the modern sense of ownership of the soil. Such gifts to ecclesiastical bodies were carefully restricted by law. A charitable grant of land to a church should be such as not to leave anyone aggrieved or "unwhole of heart," but the heirs of the grantor must object at the time and never after. The man who "buys and does not sell"—that is, he who increases the share of the family property—"is competent to make donation as he may like from his own requisition," but only so far as not to impair the family

estate; and his donation must not exceed his honour-price which he could freely dispose of. His right moreover was limited by the consent of the king. On the other hand the civil law by which the land of a man dying without heirs was divided among his kin did not govern Church estates.

In Ireland as elsewhere ecclesiastical institutions were modelled on the political and social constitution of the country. Within the borders of the Roman Empire the Christian hierarchy was established in the older framework of a centralized civil administration. But in a land to which the Empire had never reached the Irish spirit of local autonomy was strong, and the central power at Tara remained a symbol not of military authority but of national idealism. Here also the government of the Church followed that of the State. When the site of a monastery was given by a chief, and one of his kindred became the abbot, he ruled with a double jurisdiction, both as abbot or spiritual head of the territory, and as lay lord of the occupiers of the land under him, with, in some cases, the claim of his kindred to the right of succession as lay abbots. There was a bishop for every *tuath*, but if the abbot were also a bishop he had further powers as spiritual lord of his territory. With the prodigious increase of monasteries the Church became almost wholly monastic; as in Brittany, it is in fact not easy to trace the influence of the secular clergy till the ninth century.

Though the Church was not in principle aristocratic, the influence of chiefs and landowners was dominant in the early times of Christianity, since they alone had power to grant sites for Christian settlements; and for centuries monastic settlements remained under the rule of descendants of the family or *fine* that owned the land. The chief of a Church estate could be chosen from the *fine colama*, the founder's family, the *fine grin*, the family of the land, or the *manaig* or church tenants, but the choice was governed by law. Legal

benefits were refused to non-monastic churches which failed in their obligations and became corrupt or were left empty; or a church in which there was a lay superior not under correction by an abbot. The custom already existed in the seventh century, but was not considered lawful. The law-tracts, written when grants of land to the Church were relatively recent, had always in view the existence of the grantor's kin. They retained a kind of dormant right, that is, those who remained resident on the land or near it—" the kin of the subsoil "—with some ancient inalienable claim; and when the ecclesiastical owners parted with their ownership the right of the grantor's kin was revived.

On monastic lands as in the civil community joint husbandry was carried on by the family. Groups of workers who made over their land or accepted service under Church protection were apparently bound for the sake of the kingdom of heaven not to desert the monastic territory or flee from it. Deserters could find no shelter in other monastic lands. The privileged monasteries, exempt from taxes or hostings by king or chief or *tuath*, were able to conduct farming on a wealthy scale and give their tenants every advantage of roads or drainage or fences. Gifts of the people continued to pour in where they might win protection against sickness and famine, marauding animals, or hostings for war (8). They gave ewe-lambs in return for the keeping of the flock from wolves. They gave grants of land, " a fair tribute of wealth and noble treasures," loaves, cattle, tithes, cloaks, iron, linen shirts, horses and all kinds of animals, for benefits in need. No doubt the calamities and terrors which marked the century after the great plague of 664—fifty years of " pestilence," " mortality," " buidhe chonaill," famine, leprosy or smallpox, mortality of children, murrain of animals (9), storms, earthquakes, eclipses, and frequent portents in the heavens—increased the need of the people to seek consolation and aid.

We still see their awe before the manifestations of

nature in the numberless records in the Annals of events in earth or heaven—a long snow, a tempest, a "dark moon," and the like; and in the "fair of the clapping of hands" (772 A.D.) when there was lightning and thunder like unto the day of judgment, and fire from heaven on S. Michael's day, so that the Goidhil fasted two *tredans* (three days) together, with only one meal between them, through fear of the fire—a terror recalled or renewed in 799 in the "terrible vision in Clonmacnois and great repentance throughout all Ireland" (785 A.D.). The vivid sense that the world unseen was not separated by a hand-breadth from that seen, that here and now they were both one, gave to the whole people an exaltation of emotion and a response to every spiritual appeal very different in character and expression from that of the Germanic races. In the law-tracts the same anxieties are reflected: "There are three times at which the world is out of its mind: the period of a plague, the prevalence of war, the dissolution of oral contracts. There are three things that cure it: tithes, firstfruits, and alms. They forbid the periodic visit of a plague; they accomplish peace for king and *tuath;* they forbid the prevalence (?) of war; they bind everyone in his contracts good and bad; they forbid the madness of the world." The people lavished their possessions not only to seek aid against the powers of darkness, but to find security in the present for their cattle and crops and kin.

It is useful to recall a document sealed by ruling princes of Northern Ireland (10) six hundred years later (1297), which illustrates, in that tenacious province, the perils of traders in a land still but half reclaimed from bog and forest, and threatened by armed invaders. Stimulated by Boniface VIII's bull *Clericis Laicos*, the primate Nicholas MacMael Isa obtained first from Domhnall O'Neill of Tír Eógain son of Brían of the Battle of Down, and after him from Brían Mac-Mathghamhna (MacMahon) of Airgíalla, and from Donn MagUidhir (Maguire) of lough Erne, each in his public

assembly (and it may be presumed from each of the other kings of the primatial province, though the record for Clogher diocese alone has been preserved), an instrument containing these engagements: "We grant and undertake that henceforward commanders of troops shall not under cover of any custom, or rather abuse, hitherto practised, demand or in any way extort anything from shoemakers, smiths, weavers, or any other persons engaged in handicrafts that dwell in ecclesiastical territory. . . . Again inasmuch as clerks and church tenants on their way not only through open country and woods but even on roads and public highways have hitherto to a considerable extent been stopped and robbed of their cloths and other property by our soldiers and galloglasses, we promise and by the tenor of the present letters patent undertake that soldiers or any others subject to us shall by no means do such things hereafter."

The monasteries confirmed their powers of rule and protection by forming among themselves widespread confederations. Cíarán's monastery on the Shannon was assured by its position of being the finest trading centre in Ireland; where in addition, according to later legend, the gate of heaven was opened to all buried in his cemetery, and everyone who reverenced his festival might have pre-eminence of stock and riches in the present world and the kingdom of heaven in the other. "Colmán of Lann of pure splendour," cousin of king Díarmait who died in 689, founded his monastery of Lann-Ela (Lynally near Tullamore) and drew together in close federation a group of monasteries, so that in Lann should be the common cemetery of all its associated houses, where all should have the same blessing and covenant in death, and the same place of resurrection (11). A late and impossible legend avers that all the holy men of Ireland who were at Druim Ceatt besought a covenant with his house, and in the cemetery granted them at Lann heaven was assured to them. He was said to have claimed every man of Fir Cell as his lawful "familia," bound to pay dues and

tribute, and to hold his fair which ranked in tradition as one of the three most famous—"Tailtiu on the king's day," "Clonmacnois the noblest," and Lann-Ela. In making his stone church and fortified enclosure and great causeway over the bog from Lynally to Kildare, where "the swans sang to the labourers in the Swan's Land," he was in legend reported to have employed some five thousand five hundred men.

A no less famous "familia" was that of S. Coemgen (S. Kevin) of Glendalough, baptized by Cronan in the *fortuatha* (foreign tribes) of the Laigin. The mysterious lake, shut in closely by precipitous cliffs and fed by mountain torrents, was a natural site for the worship of the unknown elemental powers. Over against the pagan prehistoric structure of dry stone-work, whose ruins still survive, Kevin made his Christian cell and oratory on a rock-platform rising sheer from the haunted lake, and for his "bed" found a hollow in the cliff, at its greatest space in the centre about four feet wide and three and a half high. A monastic church was built during his life, near the primitive *cathir* and ancient burial ground, at the only outlet from the secluded lake where a stream flows into the broadening valley. Gradually the monastic life spread along the stream, where an old rath commanding the river and the fruitful lands below it were given to S. Kevin, and in its consecrated cemetery S. Cíarán of Clonmacnois was said to be buried. The holy ground, which was constantly enlarged, was famous about 800 A.D. as one of the four best "Romes of burial" * in Ireland. S. Kevin's House, probably of the ninth century, alone remains of the early ecclesiastical "city." Others must have been swept away partly before the growing wealth, partly before the recurring calamities of Glendalough. "Laymen, exiles from Mide, fathers and brothers, offered themselves both

* "*Ruam* means both 'Rome' and 'a cemetery.' In the second sense, I think it is a real Irish word *ro* + *uam*, "great excavation," and that the two words, identical inform, became confused." (Eoin MacNeill.)

men and cattle to have the protection which Coemgen left to his fair and family both high and low, both friends and foes; guarantees, and ownership, and protection to them all in coming and going, without summons, or question, or suit, or judgment, or action for debt by one against another."

> "The glory of the Laigin is the fair of Coemgen,
> The triumph of the Gaels, 'tis a goodly show."

The sterner sort of monks, however, condemned too keen trading enterprise when the monk Cellach proposed to make fine splendid gloves of the skin of an otter that daily brought a salmon to the community. The round tower in that little valley recalls the repeated Danish raids: the renewal of the churches in the new architecture shows the power of recovery of the people. Even in this remote pocket of the mountains we can trace the whole story of early Irish life—the steadfast hold on their own ancient tradition and religious customs, and side by side with it their quick welcome to every new artistic form in building or ornament, home or foreign. The skill of country workers to adapt new models to their local material, the busy trading mind, and the tenacity of the inhabitants, amid calamities of Norse and Norman wars till the final disaster of total ruin by the English in 1398, are nowhere better seen than in the tragic ruins lying at Glendalough.

In monastic histories of victory won by spiritual ascetics over their worldly opponents or rivals, trade developments fall into the background. The Irish language itself, however, carries evidence of their success in farming and tillage. *Manchuine*, labour service—a word very frequent in the laws—comes from *manach* (taken from *monachus*) which was originally used for "monk," but very early came to mean a tenant on a church estate. The agricultural skill of the monastic orders is remembered among the Germans in constant references to the missionaries as their teachers in the arts of tillage. But

perhaps greater than the protection given in monastic lands to the herds of cattle and sheep, the makers of water-channels, ploughmen, builders of fences and mills, labourers at causeways, was the protection they afforded to workers in arts and crafts. Security was needed for groups of artificers who could only perfect their elaborate and highly specialized industries by generations of training in an hereditary technique. Ordinary women of humble position and of little consideration in their time could weave the rougher cloth and linen of common life, and there was probably not the smallest hamlet which had not its cottage industry; like that of the poor widow of Fingal visited by S. Brigid, who to entertain the stranger killed her only calf, and cooked it on a fire made of the new beam of the loom; next day by the saint's gratitude both calf and beam were whole and sound. We read of Maedhoc's mother, a webstress, of Ciarán's mother with her flax drying on her walls which caught fire and set the house in flames; of poor women trying to conceal from the alms-beggars the milk and soft cheeses they carried in the corners of their mantles by pretending they were webs or balls of thread (12).

The cottage industry, however, was but a part of the manufactures which had grown up on the sheep-grazing lands. Special conditions were needed for the skilled productions of finer materials for the mantles and tunics of kings and nobles (13). In the chief families this labour fell to the women of the great house, who grew the dye-stuffs and worked at home. The importance of their work is shown by the value set on the implements. Interest for the pledge of a needle used in applied ornaments was valued at an ounce of silver, "for every woman who is an embroideress earns greater profit than even queens." The pledge of another needle was reckoned at the interest of a yearling heifer; if it be a bodkin it is a three-year-old. The work-bag of a king's wife with its lawful apparatus was counted at six chattels. The bags were furnished with textile for embroidery, gold and silver

thread, gold plate, wools, threads of all colours, "cloak-needles," "fine needles," a lath for making the fringe, patterns cut or painted in leather, and a host of other implements. So long as there were sons forthcoming the daughter had no share in her deceased father's property —"not anything but crescents of gold, and *rand* or thread of silver, and *bregda*, that is *bricin*, or thread of various colours." In some later poet of the *fiana* a romantic vision survives of a school of Irish art—how fifty of the best sewing-women in Ireland were gathered in a rath on Mag Femen to make clothing for the *fiana* throughout the year. And three of them that were kings' daughters made music for the rest on a little silver harp. And there was a very great candle-stick of stone in the middle of the rath, for they could not kindle a fire more than three times in the year for fear the smoke and the ashes might harm the needlework (14).

There was, however, a yet larger business than the home-work. The Book of Rights, first compiled about 900 A.D., tells that in the province of the Ulaid the king had the collecting both of milk, and of all sewing thread (*uama*) without opposition. So tributes to the king of the Laigin include *ruu*, and purple of fine strength, red and grey thread, white wool, yellow *blaan* and "rennet." Among the sumptuous traditional "tributes" required by the greater kings from the lesser states, or given by them to their vassal kings as "wages," the Book of Rights gives lists of thousands of suits of raiment, and cloaks of various kinds—white, red, blue, green, deep purple, variegated, plaid of lasting colour, cloaks of strength, fair cloaks with borders not crooked, purple mantles of fine brilliance, cloaks with golden borders and ring-clasps, others bordered with white, "napped cloaks with the first sewing which are trimmed with purple," mantles "royal" or "superb" or "beautiful their texture," tunics for a king with gold ornaments, green cloaks with pins of *findruine*, and so forth. This accomplished variety of weaving and colour must have

been the result of an old-established craft where the skill of manufacture was of the first order and of ancient tradition. The high repute of the worker at the loom and the embroideress is shown in the old triad: "three hands that are best in the world: the hand of a good carpenter, the hand of a skilled woman, the hand of a good smith." In the Norse wars the lament was raised that one of the evil signs of savage invasion was that "Great skill in embroidery will pass to fools and base women, so that garments will be expected without colours" (15). And the saga of Cellachán recites among the calamities of pirate wars, "Without a cloak or a good dress on king or noble lady, but only the cast-off cloaks and clothes of the Danes and the ignoble Lochlannachs. . . . Without any daughter of a king or high lord or chieftain to work embroidery . . . or skilful handiwork."

It would seem from the place-names given that various styles of weaving and decoration were made in districts specially celebrated for particular manufactures. No doubt the dyeing depended on practised skill in using the local herbs; possibly the quality of wool may have varied. We may fairly suppose that, like the sheep-farmers, the technical wool-workers may have found shelter within wide monastic territories where the flocks were safely guarded behind entrenchments, where wool was of the best, where their own quiet was protected, and a market secured to them in rich trading centres such as that of Clonmacnois. The fame remained of

> "Drumlane an abode with flocks
> In the time of the hospitable Maedoc" (16).

The Danish raiders of the Netherlands found their richest business in the traffic of fine woollen goods from the Lowland flats along the north European shores, and these astute rovers of the seas would scarcely have neglected Irish fabrics. Their incessant raids on Irish monastic communities prove that in these territories they

found stores worth frequent pillaging. The demand of new settlers along the coastline for cattle was limited; the stock of gold and silver in rifled monasteries and graves was presently exhausted; but with due measure observed, the fine woollen manufactures of the monastic markets, renewed with every return of the summer shearing, was an inexhaustible source of profit to shrewd speculators. Workers in wool and in leather doubtless provided the most profitable part of the Danish trade in Ireland (17).

Other manufactures and arts were sheltered in the monastic federations. There must have been long skill in the finishing of almost transparent parchment, and in the illuminated work on it, before the Book of Kells was fashioned, but books and writings were alike thrown into rivers and bog-holes by the pagan raiders. In the same way sculptors must have been at work for generations before the Irish crosses were made, but the heathen made special destruction of all Christian magic, whether in stone or script. Marauders left nothing remaining of the fine carving in red yew for cups and furniture and house decoration, so highly prized by the old Irish. The metal-workers were certainly as numerous as they were highly skilled, according to the evidence of the laws. There we read of the bridles decreed for every rank, gold and silver and enamel, and all the noble trappings of horses "as bright as the sun," "of fine action;" kings' girdles valued at ten chattels; swords and shields fit for princes; great pins and brooches for embroidered cloaks; drinking-horns and cups and chess-boards; the decorative cauldron-holder with its lower part of bronze and the upper of iron, which supported the huge vessel in which the meat was cooked and served at table—the value of the holder given as pledge was fixed for a *bóaire* at five chattels, a noble at ten, and a king at twenty. What the wealth of Ireland in artists' work was we may see in the noble description given in an old poem of the ninth or tenth century translated by Kuno Meyer in his

Fianaigecht, where a dead warrior recounts, with a passion for the beauty and skill of art shown in them, his amazing treasures home-made or imported: his spears and shield, his draught-board ("as thou carefully searchest for it, thou should'st not speak much: earth never covered anything so marvellous as it"), his candlesticks and cups, his rings and bracelets and pins and the bronze coil round his neck, his tiny casket ("smiths never made any work to which it can be compared") (18). Ireland like Belgium must have been full of treasures, of which scarcely a trace was left after the sacking of the Danes. Our only clue to this wealth lies in the remnants of a few sacred relics prized beyond all others by the people—the shrines of saints, their bells, and pastoral staves, scanty fragments of which survive to bear testimony to the metal-work carried on by hereditary groups of artizans.

Skilled workers no doubt sought security for their work in monastic territories exempt from military service. Corporations so powerful could give effective aid in need, or formidable opposition to arbitrary violence. Craftsmen employed by a ruler, temporal or ecclesiastical, acquired half the "honour-price" of their patron, a formidable protection which made even trifling offences against them profitable to themselves and dangerous to the offenders. "The smiths of Lann" were famous, as we may see by the story of a famous goldsmith Anniaraid, connected with Lann monastery, who had made a bridle of gold and silver for the king of Offaly, and carried it to him at the moment a criminal was about to be hanged. "Let him not be hanged," said the goldsmith. "Thou shalt have twelve cows for the bridle, or the criminal," said the king. "My choice is the criminal," said Anniaraid. The price of the bridle was duly paid by the grateful criminal, and was delivered by him to the treasury at Lann (19). Such was "the hand of a good smith."

It is no wonder if monastic benefactors of so great

virtue and influence should in legend seem to have been endowed with the lofty claims of druids and *filid*, and should expect to be received on travel under the traditional sanctions of the ancient *nemith*. Mockers alleged that they required feet-washing; they criticized the food offered: there must be no three bakings or brewings for the various ranks of their train, but one best bread and ale for all alike. Their own hospitality and good householding was famous. At Lann a group of travelling monks reproached the wife of the *erenach* for not having food and drink ready at their call: "Henceforth may every company be dissatisfied with thee." . . . "O clerics," said she, "for God's sake give me death rather than this curse." We read of bishop Etchen preparing to welcome the three Colmáns whose praises he sang: "the great good Ulster-man who is fairest in the world"—"the curly one from Conaille, the learned counsellor, skilled in every knowledge"—"my own dear foster-son, a star with grace where the world is bright." "Then three vats for bathing are made for them altogether lest any of them should go into water used by another; namely, a vat of yew with hoops of yew, and a vat of oak with hoops of willow, and a vat of oak with hoops of yew"—the water heated, it seems, by stones made hot in the fire. The dates of the tale are impossible, for Etchen was dead before the Colmáns travelled, but it illustrates for us the popular view of manners and hospitality.

In a land without towns in the modern sense the monastic "cities," very populous and very busy, were active centres of life and thought, guardians both of corporate unity, of ancient tradition, and of new ideas of progress. The *félire* of Oengus (*c.* 800 A.D.) gives us the profound emotion, not without sorrow, with which S. Oengus, monk at Clonenagh on the Nore and at Tallaght, "commemorated the king's folk around the King above the clouds," as he saw in his time the old royal encampments eclipsed by new monastic establishments, and

ancient forts of the pagans lying waste, while once solitary hermit's cells became "like Romes for the multitude of their inhabitants" (20).

"Tara's mighty burgh perished at the death of her princes: with a multitude of venerable champions the great Height of Machae (Armagh) abides."

"Right valiant Loeguire's pride has been quenched—great the anguish: Patrick's name, splendid, famous, this is on increase."

"Ráith Crúachan, it has vanished with Ailill, offspring of victory: fair the sovranty over princes that there is in the monastery of Clonmacnois."

"Ailenn's proud burgh has perished with its warlike host: great is victorious Brigit: fair is her multitudinous cemetery (Kildare)."

"Emain's burgh it hath vanished, save that its stones remain: the Rome of the western world is multitudinous Glendalough."

"A lamp lucid and beautiful is Ferns the mighty, good-great: the proud throng in the rath of Becc son of Eógan abides not."

Perhaps we may recall the no less patriotic rhapsody of the (probably) lay historian of the battle of Mag Rath looking back on his country's fame:—"The goodness of her laws, the tranquillity of her hosts, the serenity of her seasons, the splendour of her chieftains, the justice of her brehons, the regularity of her troops, the talents of her ollaves, the genius of her poets, the various musical powers of her minstrels, the botanical skill of her physicians, the art of her braziers, the useful workmanship of her smiths, and the handicraft of her carpenters."

With their estates and confederations, their dependents or "familia," their men of learning and authority, their spreading agricultural communities, their craftsmen, their increasing trade, the leading monasteries tended to become little states in themselves, with a share in economic and legal conflicts. Quarrels arose with "the stewards of the king of Erin collecting his dues in every place.

It happened that one of them killed a friend of Ciarán (of Saighir) without any guilt on his part, but mere tyranny of his lord." A chariot horse was killed by a certain noble, who was seized by the king of the southern province; Ciarán of Saighir ransomed him, and dispute arose as to the actual payment of gold and silver made. Again Ciarán was supposed in later story to have miraculously put to death the chief of the king of Mumu's household, who had strangled his hospitaller. An exceptional tale was probably that of "a cruel king in the neighbourhood of Clonmacnois. He gave all his treasures to Ciarán of Cluain to keep. Ciarán distributed them to God's poor and to churches of the saints. The king sent to demand them, and did not get them. He blamed Ciarán therefor, and imprisoned him, and said that he would not accept (any ransom) for him except sixty white cows with red ears." There were questions of poaching on monastic land, and the killing of any living thing, were it so much as a hare or angled trout. Disputes broke out over ancient legal rights to water, as in the case of the spring which S. Moeog had "revealed," where the water flowed along the land belonging to another man beside the fort. "Do not wash here," said Moeog; "this is the monks' domestic spring, and it is not fitting for women to consort with them." "We will," said they; "to us belongs the side (of the stream) which skirts our land."

Occasionally the monasteries were in dispute among themselves—whether about the annexation by an ambitious community of a priceless "yew-wood," or some matter of trade or breach of law (21). The "wars" of Clonmacnois and Clonard and Birr and Durrow and Cork among themselves, or with neighbouring kings, were for reasons so well known at the time as to find no mention in the Annals: in 764 "Clonmacnois and Durrow at war"; in 774 a conflict between the high-king Domnach and the "familia" of Clonard; in 783 a "battle" between the abbot of Ferns and his steward;

in 814 a hosting by the son of the king of Connacht and the abbot of Clonmacnois on the Hy Many, where many innocent people were slain; in 816 a "battle" by Cathal king of the south Laigin and the "familia" of Taghmon on the "familia" of Ferns wherein four hundred persons were slain. No doubt in trade, when argument had ended, minute arrangements for debt and fine and pledge, and the right in certain cases to claim civil hostages even to the shedding of blood, led to attempts at rescue and release; and breaches of order between powerful agricultural and trading federations and the state authorities, were met by the usual legal methods of the "hosting" to enforce obedience under the general common law. Trouble may have arisen also on the election of head or ruler of important monasteries, if we judge by an entry in the Annals of 804, "Cenannus given, without battle, to Columcille the musical."

The monasteries themselves cherished their fires of patriotism to their own people's land. In the legend the dying Cíarán of Saighir asked of God that "pre-eminence in battle should rest upon the men of Ossory, and that they should never be ejected from their own territory, for he himself belonged to them by origin." When two ascetics of Muscraighe "desired to go into exile in Ossory," one Odrán had the word of Cíarán—"by whatever way thou shalt go thou shalt come whole to Muscraighe at last." In the foretelling of the strange journey in which he and a monk of Terryglass should carry the abbot of Terryglass "concealed in wheat" to his burial, the promise was added—"thou shalt come, O Odrán, to thine own monastery and in it shall be thy resurrection" (22). Tradition told that Mochuta would only allow his pupil Colmán to leave him on the strict promise that he would not go out of the province of Mumu: and another legend gives the curious tale of the king of Tara and the king of Mide joining to expel Mochuta himself from the monastery of Rahen that he founded in Mide. Possibly there may have been

instances of local political agitation on the dangerous southern border, and it would not be impossible that in troubled times the high-king Áed may have distrusted the visit of the abbot of Clonard in 786 to the " parochia " of the monastery in the territory of Mumu. There is, however, no evidence at any time of any serious conflict between lay and ecclesiastical authorities. That even disputes were rare is shown by the fact that the Annals note them among the surprising and remarkable events they catalogue.

Church and State in fact worked together under a common national system. Whatever might be their exemptions and liberties and pride, the monastic territories were not beyond the authority of the common law. It was allowed that when a man whose life was forfeit came under the protection of a church he could save his life by payment. Lawyers, however, differed. Some thought that churches and ruling nobles could give protection " without asking questions," a right which the *féni* grades did not possess. According to another doctrine if the accused did not " offer law," the church incurred liability for protecting him or allowing him to escape (23). An old poem on the duties of a king gives his criminal jurisdiction without exceptions :

> " Every offender who is not restrained (by the law),
> Every deliberate habitual evil-doer,
> From fetter to dungeon,
> From dungeon to gallows."

There was no doubt in the decision of a high-king, in a later tale, when he demanded a refugee criminal who had fled to the powerful S. Colmán in his monastery of Lann-Ela. " Give me my prisoner, Colmán." " Thou shalt have instead of him the kingship of Ireland for thyself and for thy offspring till Doom," said Colmán. " That is not sensible," said Conall ; " who else shall hold the kingship of Ireland but my offspring ? " " Thou shalt have heaven for thyself," said Colmán, " and heaven

to thy successors till Doom." "No," said Conall, "I am looking forward to heaven as it is." In the end the king as chief executive of the law was given possession of the criminal. "Then Maelodrán was killed in front of the cemetery of Colmán son of Luachan, so that he is the first dead person buried at Lann (24)." On the other hand the monasteries could well maintain their rights against illegal pretensions. Thus in 811 Tallaght resisted the forcible violation of its termon or precincts with equal force, and so effectively avenged itself by the interruption of the Fair of Tailtiu "that neither horse nor chariot arrived there with Áed son of Niall;" finally the wrong to the monastery was only condoned by many gifts from the guilty Uí Neill of the midlands.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XIII.

(1) P. 244. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 167; "Ancient Laws of Ireland," Vol. V, p. 483.
(2) P. 245. O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," p. 81.
(3) P. 245. Plummer: "Lives of Irish Saints," II, pp. 285, 287–8.
(4) P. 246. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII), p. 27.
(5) P. 246. Plummer: "Lives of Irish Saints," II, p. 219.
(6) P. 246. "Vita S. Flannani," C. 3, e Codice Salmanacensi.
(7) P. 247. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 149.
(8) P. 249. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII), pp. 41, 45, 49–51, 55, 57, 59, 67, 93.
(9) P. 249. Reeves: "Adamnan's Life of Columcille," pp. liii, 183.
(10) P. 250. See *Louth Archæological Journal*, IV, p. 251–2. Mr. Charles MacNeill has most kindly given me this reference, and those on pages 246 and 254 *re* S. Blathmait and S. Brigid.
(11) P. 251. Plummer: "Lives of Irish Saints," II, p. 167. These "Lives" of a late date, often full of local prejudice and political suggestions, cannot be relied on historically, but they are useful for local conditions understood by all the farming people of the time, and for occasional traditions from an older age.
(12) P. 254. *Ib.*, II, pp. 116, 161, 185. Stokes "Lismore Lives," p. 330, from Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum*, p. 42.
(13) P. 254. O'Curry: "Manners and Customs," III, pp. 112–20. For famous embroideresses see *ib.*, p. 122. In a poem of the twelfth century we read of "the fair close-woven hood of

Crothrainne. Gold is its woof, silver underneath it, soft to the skin is its lining. . . . It is worth fifty bond-maids whatever, it was made in the Land of Promise" (Kuno Meyer: "Fianaigecht," p. 51, *R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVI).

(14) P. 255. See also the passage in the Courtship of Emer (Eleanor Hull: "The Cuchullin Saga," pp. 60–61), where Emer sits surrounded by her handmaids who came to her for instruction in needlework.

(15) P. 256. "Colloquy of the Two Sages" in *Revue Celtique*, XXVI, 43.

(16) P. 256. Plummer: "Lives of Irish Saints," II, p. 252.

(17) P. 257. For Irish leather see "Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie," VI, 1907, pp. 192–3; O'Grady: Catalogue of Irish MSS., p. 435.

(18) P. 258. Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," pp. 9 *seq.* Amairgen the chief smith of the king of Raithlenn is mentioned in Plummer, "Lives of Irish Saints," II, p. 11.

(19) P. 258. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman," p. 39 (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII).

(20) P. 260. "Félire of Oengus," pp. 18, 24, 25, 26.

(21) P. 261. For the "familia" of Durrow stealing from Lann-Ela the holy earth that came from Rome see Plummer, "Lives of Irish Saints," II, p. 167.

(22) P. 262. *Ib.*, II, p. 117.

(23) P. 263. "Harbour not criminals as against tribes in grief, that is to say: give no asylum in your territory to criminals while the tribe of them that are slain still mourns." . . . "The Church is free to favour criminals' escape (let them get to the wood) provided they do not take up their quarters with her:" O'Grady, "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," p. 101.

(24) P. 264. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII), pp. 69, 71.

CHAPTER XIV

THE IRISH COMMONWEALTH

According to early tradition S. Benignus—the most prominent of Patrick's disciples of native Irish blood—drew up in Latin the first written code of the rights of territorial kings. Under Cormac Mac Cuilenan, king of Cashel (901–908 A.D.), this was expanded by two learned writers, Selbach and Oengus. From internal evidence it would seem that only the section relating to Munster * was framed in Cashel; and that it was circulated as a model, on which each of the other sections was drawn up by scholars of the principal provincial kings. Their combined account became the first form of the "Book of Rights" (*c.* 900), which was further developed under Brían Bórama (*c.* 1000). We have thus in the early tenth century a picture, unequalled for that time in any state outside Byzantium, of the political system of Ireland and the relation of the kings to their under-kings—at least in its theoretical form. Two poems are allotted to each state, to define the tribute due to the over-king from his subordinate rulers, and his customary gifts to them—the *tuarastal* (a word still used for wages), acceptance of which was an act of homage, so that the lower king became the other king's

* So far the provinces representing the old Fifths have been given in a Middle Irish form familiar in Ireland. Under Norse or foreign influences old divisions became known under the altered names of Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Meath. Connacht was much as before. It seems convenient from this period to use the terms more familiar to modern readers.

" man," so to speak, if only in a figurative or ceremonial sense. The sub-king might be free of tribute but bound to accept certain presents from his over-king, to entertain him once a year, and to bring his quota of fighting-men to the lord's hostings. Or he might owe both annual tribute and compulsory service of fighting-men.

The " Book of Rights," whether in its first compilation about 900 A.D., or in its development a hundred years later under Brían Bórama, gives no place to the high-king, and neither mentions " tribute " due to him, nor " wages " given by him. The only tribute that he ever demanded, the *bóroma* claimed from Leinster, not as a matter of ancient tradition but of mere force, was defeated by continual resistance till it came to an end, possibly through the alliance of the Leinstermen with the Norsemen before the " Book of Rights " was finally written.

While the head of the commonwealth, the *ardrí*, had no place in the old traditional laws, his power was clearly defined in later custom and never disputed. " It was a universal thing that to Tara of the kings all Ireland's charges and dues prescribed and rents must be brought in to them " (1). His dignity was founded on common consent. He sat among the other kings, not as their supreme lord, but rather as the first in rank, the chairman, so to speak, of the commonwealth of states. A " strong " king among the Old Irish was not a conquering warrior, imposing a new law. In times of grave general peril, or by force of singular character and ability, he could make his command effective, but he had no power to reject or alter the ordinary constitutional government of the provinces and lesser kingdoms. Even the most ambitious could only maintain limited rights allowed by ancient law and public convenience. In his hostings over the country he was the symbol of authority, the chief officer of the government charged to punish notorious crime, the agent not of war, but of law. An

Old Irish verse gives the common view of his function :— "the hated of all thieves, he who has possession of the house of Tara, he who puts robbers in fetters" (2). He was responsible for the graver police administration—to exact the penalty for killing, or for "secret murder" when the body was hidden, to execute judgments of the courts, to claim hostages decreed by law. Irish annals did not need to explain the meaning of every "war" or "battle" of a king's police hosting, or invasion of an offending *tuath* to levy a fine. Probably the demolition in 802 * of a fort on Loch Ree by the king of Connacht was an attack on a robbers' stronghold; for in 846 we read of a similar destruction by the high-king Mael Seachlinn of the island of Loch Ramor in Cavan, against a great band of the "sons of death" of the Luaigni and Gailenga (peoples of Brega) who were ravaging the districts "after the manner of the 'Genti.'" Again the "plundering" of Ulstermen in 809 by the high-king was not a case of savage war, but the exacting of the penalty due from the *tuath* for the killing of the abbot of Telach-liss in his house *beside the shrine of Patrick*.

> "Heroic nobles return sadly,
> Ulidians injured by Áed,
> Where they stayed under disgrace"

—held it would seem in pledge at the mouth of Strangford Loch. Besides the forcible collection of legal fines refused, there were hostings under the high-king's authority to arbitrate in disputes between subordinate kingdoms, or in family conflicts for inheritance—such as the hostings of Áed son of Niall in 802 when he divided Meath between two brothers; or on the Leinster border at Rathcore when he parted the province between two rival claimants; and again after there had been much fighting among the Leinstermen themselves in 814, when he returned in 818 to establish two heirs of the older victorious house. In 835 Bran of the same house

* Dates throughout this chapter refer to the Ulster Annals.

was ordained king by a later *ardrí*, Niall Caille. These disputes, on borderlands between north and south, could easily arise from questions of allegiance demanded by the "king of Munster" or the "king of Ireland." Old memories of rivalry between Crúachu and Tara probably persisted in Connacht, to judge from occasional efforts to carry off hostages, or to claim alliances, by midland groups of the discontented; such as possibly the invasion in 808 A.D. by Connacht men as far as Tailtiu, which was driven back by Áed son of Niall, and their retreat scoffingly compared to a flight of goats and kids. The "plundering" in Meath and Brega by Niall Caille about 840 may have been in retribution for their giving hostages to kings of Connacht or Munster, a derogation of the high-king's legal rights.

In cases of recalcitrant rulers the high-king, even if guilt was notorious, only acted by judgment of the court. In 848 Cinaed, petty king of the Ciannachta in southern Brega, turned against the high-king Mael Sechnaill through the assistance of the Foreigners, so that he wasted the Uí Neill, both churches and districts, from the Shannon to the sea, and treacherously destroyed the island of Loch Gabhar till it was level with the surface; and the oratory of Treoit was burned by him, and two hundred and sixty men in it. Two years later (850) Cinaed was taken in ropes to a pool where he was drowned—"a cruel death"—by Mael Sechnaill and Tigernach king of Loch Gabhar, "with the approval of the good men of Ireland and of the successor of Patrick especially." Evidently the legal punishment had been delayed till it was possible to have a full and formal judgment in Armagh, with the congregation of Patrick and the clerics of Meath, between the high-king and the northern nobles, and the aggrieved king himself and his nobles.

In punitive expeditions no king had a free hand to go out fighting at will: he acted by order of the king's court, or of a general assembly, and was provided with

the hosting by public authority or consent. If he had a right to call to his court any noble or landed proprietor he chose, by sending to him a gift or "wage" which could not legally be refused, he dared not flout public opinion by an arrogant abuse of this privilege. The *tuatha* under him might refuse pledges to go to his aid "if they were not proper." Moreover in the conduct of the hosting he had to conform to the laws of military service. For example if the king of Connacht was more than six weeks on an expedition the forces from Uí Maine had a right simply to go home (3). The men of Oriel were only bound to attend the high-king's hosting every third year ("and they do not then go if it be spring or autumn"), with restitution for every man lost on the hosting; no repayment of theft was admitted on their part if the "thief's oath" deny it; their hostages were not bound in fetters but only obliged to swear "by the hand of the king" that they would not make their escape; seven hundred is their rising out and seven hundred cows given them in return for the hosting (4). Ireland was not a military country. The main business of its people was agriculture, and levies of herdsmen and ploughmen, splendid fighters as they were, only served as soldiers for six or eight weeks in the year, and that at fixed times between the spring work and the harvest. Military establishments were feared as dangerous to popular freedom. The king for his part had to consider the cost of calling out his levies. "They do not accompany a king to battle except for reward," said the laws. The over-king moreover had to pay the life-price or sick maintenance of every citizen of a free state killed or hurt in battle for him, evidently a useful deterrent from hostings and woundings as well as a solace to combatants.

Though the story of Irish kingship has usually been represented as a repulsive tale of ferocity and chaos, the actual record gives proof of a permanent order both in the lesser and the greater kingdoms, maintained by general

consent. The prevalent theory that Irish kings were all murdered as soon as they reached the throne is not exact, nor that if they occasionally survived the age of sixteen they lived in perpetual danger. The actual record of the high-kings descended from Niall of the Nine Hostages is remarkable. In over two hundred years (*c.* 370–597) we find eight reigns of from twenty to twenty-seven years and one of eleven years. Amid calamities of pestilence and famine from 564 to 571 A.D. there were three short reigns. From 597 to 734 A.D., the most irregular period in the history of the "monarchy," there were sixteen reigns, one for a year, five for three or four years, and ten of five to eighteen years. In three later centuries (734–1022) there was one reign of three years, and thirteen ranging from seven to thirty-eight. Such a record can compare well with that of any country in Europe.

In the early period of the high-kings of Niall's house the supremacy wavered irregularly among four branches of his descendants—those of Ailech and Tír Conaill, and in the south those of Clann Cholmáin and the Síl nÁeda Sláine. During a hundred years of family feuds among the southern Uí Neill the high-kings came mostly from the north (565–657). In the later stress of the northern quarrels the southern family held some advantage for nearly a hundred years, till 727. For nearly two centuries, in fact, the strongest king, whether in the midlands or the north, was recognized as king of Ireland. After the death of Díarmait in 565, last of the great-grandsons of Niall of whom we hear, his descendants broke into two factions. Díarmait (544–565) left his son Colmán Bec, "the little," king over Meath proper (now Westmeath and most of King's County and Longford), with his fort at Dún na Scíath on Loch nAininn or Ennel near Mullingar: "Clann Cholmáin," says an ancient genealogist, "were distributed throughout Mide so as to possess the lordship of every *tuath* and perpetual sovereignty over them." His son Aed Sláine

(565) was king over the eastern plain to the sea and for a time high-king of Ireland, and left descendants—the Síl nÁeda Slaíne—who held lordships in Brega and even Tara itself: "A golden wand laid across a plate of white bronze, that is what the seed of Áed Sláine are athwart Brega's plain" (5). Seventeen high-kings in all came of the Clann Cholmáin. There had been nine of the Síl nÁeda Sláine before their rejection in 727 from the Tara succession, and even after they still continued to hold authority over all Brega including Tara, until the dynasty was finally suppressed at the close of the tenth century by the high-king Mael Sechnaill, chief of Clann Cholmáin. During this time, even after the Síl nÁeda Sláine were shut out of the high-kingship, no king of Ireland could occupy Tara without an army in strength to hold the fortress.

Meantime the twofold claim of the northern Uí Neill also persisted for two centuries. One of these northern branches was shut out from succession at the same time as the revolution which broke the Síl nÁeda Sláine. In 734 Flaithbertach of the Cenél Conaill was compelled to abdicate the high-kingship by Áed Aldan, king of Cenél nEógain: the last high-king from Tír Conaill, he retired into religious life at Armagh, where he died thirty-one years later, while Áed reigned in his place. The Cenél Conaill being pushed aside, the Cenél nEógain now held a monopoly in the north, like the Clann Cholmáin in the south—a system which lasted for three hundred years to come. Until 1022 the high-kingship (with but two interruptions) was reserved to the Cenél nEógain of the north and the Clann Cholmáin of the south, who succeeded each other in the monarchy in regular alternation (738–1022), though there is no record of any express pact to secure this succession. Only in the height of the Danish wars was there any irregularity: Congalach king of Brega, of the line of Áed Sláine, became high-king out of his turn (944) after a striking success over the Norsemen of Dublin.

Sixty years later (1004) Brían Bórama of the Eóganachta of Munster superseded for ten years the reigning monarch Mael Seachlinn, seventeenth king of the line of Colmán. A century of confusion followed the Danish invasion and wars. But in the great rally of the Irish in 1258 against the English occupation, when the chiefs sought to restore the monarchy it was an O'Neill they elected for the "coming to Tara." Throughout the Middle Ages the O'Neills gave to Ireland her greatest princes and defenders, and held the lead down to the time of Shane O'Neill and Hugh of Tyrone.

The lists of local and provincial kings in the same way demonstrate the unshakable fidelity of the Irish to traditional lines of succession, even if interrupted in times of tumult and confusion (6). The kings of Connacht for a thousand years, till the Norman invasion, were taken without exception from the descendants of Niall's brothers Bríon and Fiachra. In Munster the ruling Eóganachta broke into three branches. The poem of O'Dúbacain, which gives a summary of the kings of Munster, states that seven were slain in battle or by arms, and forty-four died peaceful deaths; and this is borne out by the list in the Laud MSS., which refers to a period from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. For three centuries without any break the law of succession was observed in Leinster between septs descended from the grandson of Catháir Mór, Bresal, who died in 435. Till 727 the kingship was shared between two related families of the Uí Dúnlainge of the Liffey valley and the Uí Teigh, with only one king of the Uí Cennselach of Ferns—the warrior Brandub, fierce fighter against the Uí Neill till his death in 604. In 727 Murchad of the Uí Dúnlainge left three sons, in whose families the succession remained unbroken for over three hundred years (727–1042), each line in turn obtaining the kingship with perfect regularity at least once in nine generations throughout that time—the Uí Dúnchada from near Dublin, the Uí Fáelain, and the Uí Muiredaig from north

and south Kildare. One Áed of the Cennselach line shared the kingship with Murchad's son Bran, joined him in war against the high-king Áed Allan, and died with him in battle (738). From the genealogies we learn that both in their early history, and during the Norman invasion and the Tudor wars, the Leinstermen proved their fidelity to the traditions of their ruling line.

The modern fiction of "tribal states" has led to the fiction of "tribal wars" in a country assumed to be without any settled rule of national life, or bond between the states. It is clear, however, that in Ireland wars were rare either between lesser or provincial kings: nor were there any wars of revolt of the people against their hereditary rulers. The common folk were not partners in family feuds carried on with horrible ferocity. We have a record of the public indignation at the feuds of the southern Uí Neill from "the first fratricide of Clann Cholmáin and of Áed Sláine's seed," when Áed Sláine slew the son of Colman and was himself slain in return. Poets told in lamentation of venerable and sacred trees, oak and ash, that perished under the rule of that distracted house (7). In conflicts springing out of the calamitous law of succession, champions defying an old and feeble king, competing warriors of a line dropping out of succession and wealth, the chief hurt probably fell on the kingly family itself. Later, under stress of foreign invasion, reckless adventurers for power were tempted to seek outside support, whether from Gael or Norman or English, and family scandals became national disasters. It was not until after centuries of foreign war that the custom foreshadowed in a law-tract of the eighth century was put into practice in the thirteenth, and during the king's life his successor or *tanist* was elected from "the makings of a king," the family heirs.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XIV.

(1) P. 267. "Silva Gadelica," II, 88.
(2) P. 268. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," No. 50.
(3) P. 270. "Book of Rights," p. 139.
(4) P. 270. *Ib.*, p. 135.
(5) P. 272. "Silva Gadelica," II, 90, 79.
(6) P. 273. For the Irish law of dynastic succession see Eoin MacNeill's "Celtic Ireland" (pp. 114–143).
(7) P. 274. See *R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, X, p. 149; d'Arbois de Jubainville: "Cours de Littérature Celtique," I, p. 126.

CHAPTER XV

ASSEMBLIES

Public assemblies of the *tuatha*, the provinces, and the high-king, celebrated the Nature festivals of the old world. The feast of the " mother of the gods " Briganti (Latin Brigantia, Irish Brigit) (1) was held in early February at the ewe-milking, the first promise, at the end of winter and night, of food to come with the new year's sun; when the " White Lady from Liffe " was remembered stepping with her sheep over the plain of Kildare, or driving across it in her chariot as she cried, " If this plain were mine I would offer it to the Lord of the Elements." " It is as if she has in fact done it," was the ardent comment of Columcille. Life was again breathed into the earth, when days are longer by a " cock-stride " and the candle may be laid aside: when spinners and weavers again follow Brigit at her white loom; when the oyster catcher, Giolla Brigide, does her service; when the dandelion, Bearnan Brigide, begins to flower, and the linnet, Big-ean-Brigide, to sing. The feast is still observed by the Irish as with prayer they gather rushes and straw to weave " S. Brigit's crosses " of the sun, or hang out ribbons as symbols of her famous cloak (2). The season was not a time for festive assemblies and sports, but it had a strong hold on popular emotion. The honours once given to Brigit Bandea (" the goddess ") of the Tuatha de Danann were transferred in part to the celebrated foundress of the nuns of Kildare—the " Mary of the Gael," the foster-mother of the Gaels, affable to strangers, terrible to the false swearer (3)—the leading saint in the *félire* of Oengus,

where she is mentioned seventeen times. The great fair of Uisnech, "where the men of Ireland were wont to exchange their wares and other jewels," was held at the feast of Beltene in May, when the first plenty of the summer came with the cow-milking, the date from which the age of all calves was calculated: triumphant fires were kindled to the mysterious god Bel, and cattle sacrificially driven between the flames. In August the feast of Lugh, the god of light and of day-dawn, of fire, of arts and sciences, was celebrated at the cemetery of Tailtiu, where in the time of the Five Fifths kings of the old Ulster were buried; we may still see the levelled platform of the hill-side where from the "King's seat" the *ardrí* could overlook the games on the vast green amphitheatre. The meeting at Tara was held at Samain in November, the day when the Tuatha de Danann, gods of the sun and light, conquered the Fomorians, gods of darkness and death, and drove them out of Ireland. "A prince," says Cormac MacAirt, "should light his lamps on Samain day and welcome his guests with clapping of hands and comfortable seats, and the cup-bearers should be active in distributing meat and drink."

Such gatherings implied means of communication. For the coming and going of processions to those stately and thronged assemblies and fairs there must have been a system of roads; and in fact the history of Old Ireland, its frequent communications in all directions, its hostings, the gatherings of general conventions, even, as we shall see, the transporting of ships by road, testify to the sufficient highways of the country (4). One of the oldest in Ireland was perhaps the "road of the Court" (5) which crossed the Dodder and the Liffey and struck to the north—a road famous for the chief hospitaller Da Derga at Tallaght where the mountain passes from Wicklow open on to the "old plain," for the ford or floating bridge over the Liffey, and beyond it for the house of hospitality at Lusk. The five ways to Tara were in use down to the sixteenth

century. One of these across the Shannon had its hospitaller's house about five miles from Athlone, where a stone castle was built later; another at Killeronan in Galway; and many more in places not identified or forgotten. There must have been one not far from "the noisy pass" of Gowran.

We have already seen that every *tuath* had its road, "to every chief his highway, that is to say: to every one that is a chief belongs compensation for the cutting up of his road" (6). "A nut-laden bough all on the royal road (*i.e.* on the very highway) even the ill-disposed would for a whole year pretermit to pluck, for peril of Niall of the Nine Hostages his descendant" (7). Tradition tells of the cleansings of the highway in the time of horse-racing, of winter, and of war; the clearing of its brushwood, its water, and its weeds, that it soil not the chariots on a journey, nor the horses going to a fair, nor hinder the hosting going to battle. The rules of hospitality show the constant stream of travellers on business, pleasure, learning, pilgrimage, or hunting. "If thou art a husbandman be prudent, be benign unto all. Bid guests welcome though they should come every hour, since every guest is Christ, no trifling saying; better is humility, better gentleness, better liberality towards him" (8). "Let us," said a rich wife to her husband, "make now a great house, so that everyone may find his fill with us at our proper place, and that our friends and our counsellors may obtain somewhat from us" (9). The guest too had his obligations. "A blessing the departing left, and carried away gratitude" (10). On the other hand the Triads give us the devastating criticism never lacking in Ireland: "Three sorrowful ones of an alehouse: the man who gives the feast, the man to whom it is given, the man who drinks without being satiated."

Every confederation of states doubtless held central assemblies for common business, by the graves of national heroes, or at one of the famous cities of the dead. The memory of the Great Fifths was preserved in leading

fairs such as Crúachu in Connacht, Carman in Leinster, Nenagh, site of the great fair of Munster, or the most illustrious *oenach* at Tailtiu, over which the *ardrí* presided at his first coming to Tara.

The only full account we have of an early *oenach* refers to a site long forgotten, " Carman of the heroes," the central assembly of Leinster. The fair had fallen into disuse when in 1033 and 1079 attempts were made to revive it, and a poem written to encourage this restoration describes the ancient splendours of the festival in " the cemetery of noble valiant kings "—" no pursuit of profit could they pursue for ardent love of noble Erinn." Every three years it had been held at the August festival of Lugh, and scarcely was one assembly ended when a two years' preparation began for the next. On these great occasions an *oenach* took on the air of an ordered town (11), with streets straight and firm, lined on each side by smooth conical-roofed houses, avenues of peaked hostels for the companies of jurists, authors, scholars, and musicians, and on the bright surface of the pleasant hills sleeping-booths wrought of woven branches for the general company. The first day, once devoted to the gods, became the " Fair of the Saints." The second was given to the kings of Leinster, the third to the women, the fourth to the tributary states, the fifth to the royal princes, the sixth to the Leinster freemen, the seventh to the men of Ossory. Times were appointed for discussion of the privileges and laws of the province and their restraints, for litigation and decisions of the courts, for regulation of taxes and tributes. Three markets were held, for food and clothes, for live stock, and for " Greeks " selling gold and silver and precious fabrics of the East. Everything was provided that could interest the people. Professors of the arts, both the noble and the base, as well as non-professionals, were there selling and exhibiting their compositions and other wares to kings; and rewards were given for every article that was just or

lawful to be sold or exhibited or listened to. There was "the slope of the steeds" for horse-racing, "the slope of the cooking, the slope of the embroidering women," buffoons and ballad-singers, trumpets and horns, a revelry of wit and exuberant gaiety surrounding the solemn business of the courts. All weapons were left behind as the people entered an Assembly, and a quarrel ending in death was punished by execution without any possibility of pardon by family composition. Bound by the ancient laws interpreted by the brehons, an Irish king had no more power to make a "King's peace" than a "King's justice" where he travelled.

Dr. MacNeill makes an interesting comparison between the formulæ used by the English and the Irish in enacting a new law. The English introduction to an Act of Parliament stands, "Be it hereby enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons, in this Parliament assembled." The Old Irish opening words to a proposed law were, "It is upon the souls of the men of Ireland."

We have seen in the story of Druim Ceatt that a public Assembly was the only place and way in which legislation could be accomplished in ancient Ireland. This assembly, called by the *ardrí* in 574, recorded a verdict of wrongful action against the high-king himself. It framed a law to regulate the political relations between Dál Ríata in Ireland and its king residing in Alba. It decreed, by a new law of the utmost social importance, the position of the bardic order in Ireland.

There is no evidence that the king himself had any power to legislate: in his court he could come to decisions on his own authority, but the members were evidently entitled to take part in the deliberations, to express their opinion, and even to overrule the king's verdict. No doubt the free clients were jealous of their privileges. The right to elect a king, and it would seem the leading officials of the *tuatha*—chief poets, jurists,

craftsmen, or physicians—seems to have lain with the whole body of freemen meeting in these assemblies. They were responsible for judicial and legislative decisions. It seems that the nobles conferred in a place apart, and brought their verdict to the general body of citizens to be ratified (12); and probably, as a rule, the assembly of freemen was guided in its decision by the *airecht*.

The *airecht* or court (*airecht* translates the Latin *curia*) was a part of each periodical public assembly. A meeting of the nobles and persons of distinction, it formed a kind of senate, and seems to have been the leading influence. A description of an *airecht* has been drawn up by Dr. Eoin MacNeill:—

"Besides meeting in the assembly of the *tuath*, the *airecht* met more frequently in the king's house,* and so may be regarded as the *curia regis*. Such separate meetings of court could not legislate for the *tuath*, but could decide in cases of litigation brought before it and could discuss matters of state. It is clear that these meetings were also courts in the social sense, and each meeting was followed in the evening by a banquet.

"The text first gives the order of those who were present, naming them in their classes from west to east, beginning with the south side. The door is inferred to be in the west side or end of the house. The house or hall of meeting must have been typically an elongated rectangle in plan. The well-known plan of the Banquet-house of Tara represents such a hall on the largest scale. In it, however, the assembled company was so large that side-doors, seven on each side, were provided. In *Crith Gablach*, the house has only one door, being the house

* "In *Crith Gablach* ('Ancient Laws of Ireland,' IV, 338) a passage beginning with the question 'How is a king's house ordered?' gives a brief description of a king's *airecht* or court convened in his house. The official translation is defective. Meyer assigns the text to the eighth century. I think it belongs to the early part of that century." (Eoin MacNeill.)

of a king of a *tuath*, since only one king is supposed to be present.

"Nearest to the door on the south side were the *amuis*, the king's bodyguards, who had the duty of accompanying the king at his going out and in. This they did in ceremonial order, one of them in front of the king, one behind him, and one on each side of him, for their proper number was four. They should be men ransomed or freed by the king from imprisonment or death or captivity or raised from serfdom, so that they should be under a personal obligation of fidelity and attachment to him. They should not be persons saved in battle, lest they might play him false or slay him through malice or attachment (to his enemies). It is evident that these guards were freemen, and they probably had seats at the banquet. They are not said to carry arms in attendance on the *airecht*.

"Next to these was *fer gill do gialdnaib*, 'a man in pledge for (the king's) vassals.' This man was a pledge for the performance of their dues by the king's immediate vassals, for kings, like ruling nobles, had personal subjects, free or unfree 'clients.' Their pledgeman was a man of substance, having the qualification of a non-ruling noble in landed property. He had charge of the king's stock (*i.e.* was answerable for the revenue from vassals who took stock from the king), and of his *córus féne* (*i.e.* his civil dues and obligations apart from his official affairs as king). Thus he was a kind of steward of the king's private estate.

"Next, the *techtai*, 'envoys' from other states. Their chief normal business was probably in connection with interterritorial pacts (*cairdde*) under which reciprocal jurisdiction was set up between states.

"Next, the *dáma*, visiting parties, guests, or perhaps (since the word has this meaning also) those who came in the retinue of nobles, poets, etc.

"Next, *eícis*, men of learning.

"Next, *harpers*. These sat next to the king on his left.

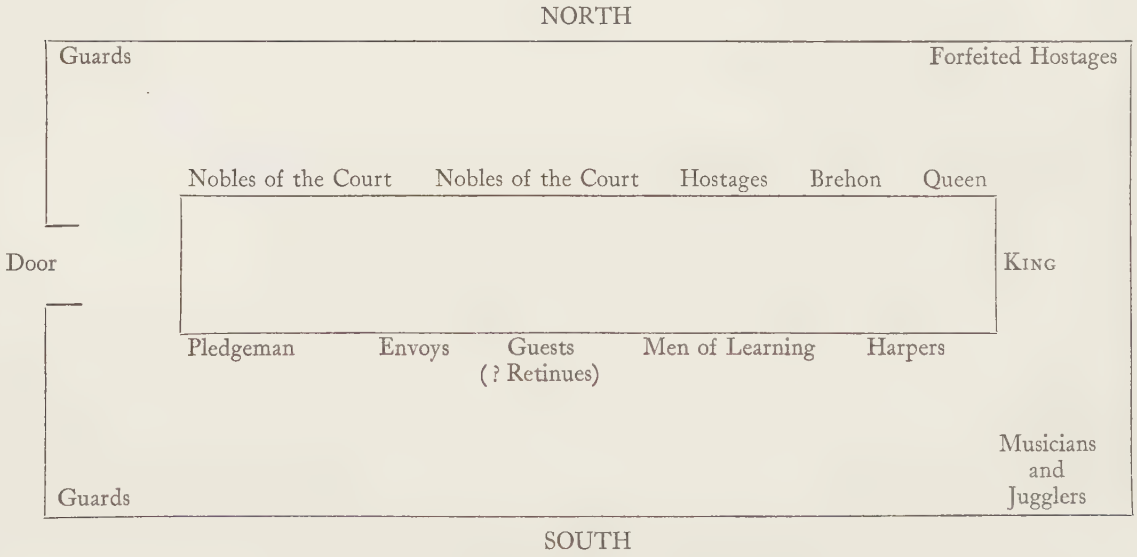

Illustration of a King's *Airecht*. (Eoin MacNeill.)

"Next, in the south-eastern corner of the house, behind the royal seat, musicians and jugglers, *i.e.* hired performers.

"On the northern side, nearest the door, were the guards of the court, a *féindith* or captain of *fiana*, and a *fergnio* or champion. 'Each of these two had his spear before him always against disorder in the banquet-house.'

"Next, and doubtless occupying most of the northern side, which was on the king's right hand, his *soerchéli* or 'free clients.' 'These are the folk who are the company of a ruler'—that is, the men who are called his *socii* or companions in the Latin of the Annals. They were in fact the chief men of the *tuath*. The law of free clientship provides that, though a freeman could refuse to become client to a noble, he could not refuse to take 'free stock' from his king. The king therefore could establish the personal bond of clientship (*céilsine*) between any noble and himself. A noble was thereby bound to attend the king in court and assembly. The law is silent as to whether the king could refuse to grant stock to a noble. It was probably not thought likely that the king would desire to exclude any man of sufficient standing from the *airecht*, since, even if he disliked a noble, he would still desire his presence and allegiance.

"Next were the hostages (*géill*), then the king's *brithem* or legal assessor, then the queen, on the king's immediate right. In the north-east corner, over against the hired musicians and jugglers, were the forfeited hostages in fetters—as it were in a kind of pillory, separated from the company. Hostages who were not forfeit occupied a place of honour, between the nobles of the court and the king's seat. They were treated as principal guests. The ordinary literature confirms this, *e.g.* where the hostages of the Ulaid sat at Cormac's table near to the king. The text quoted shows that normally the life of a hostage, though forfeit, was spared, and he was held a prisoner without honour.

" The text does not actually say, but we may understand, that the king sat at the eastern end of the table."

The most important *airecht* was that summoned by each high-king at the beginning of his reign to his encampment at Tara, the choice site in all Ireland, dominating the midlands, the gap of Ulster, and roads west and south. There the chief sub-kings were entertained in houses set apart and kept for them. In the king's " house of conversation " the nobles brought their homage, and the charges and dues prescribed, and the rents of Ireland were reviewed; courts of justice were held and new laws made and proclaimed. A curious illustration survives in the special " royal meeting " recorded in 784 between the *ardrí* Donnchad and Fiachna king of the so-called Ulaid—a territory of divided peoples, long in revolt against the Uí Neill of the north, and falling into great disorder or even anarchy. Donnchad, being of the southern Uí Neill, may have hoped to act as mediator, and apparently failed. The assembly was held on Inis na rígh in the eastern part of Brega—possibly one of the islands near Skerries.

> " Of what effect
> Was the meeting at Inis na rígh?
> Donnchad would not go upon the sea,
> Fiachna would not come ashore."

" To come into his house " was the typical recognition of a king's authority, even when he happened to be encamping in an alien state or province. He held court " in his house " or tent on the field, and those who " came into it " recognized the court. The meeting at Inis na rígh was one in which neither king would enter the other's house—Fiachna's " house " being his ship.

Recorded instances of the high-king's " assemblies " or " synods " indicate that they were equally formed of laymen and clerics. The Church, as we have seen, was organized after the model of the State, and the co-operation of lay and ecclesiastical authorities was of the

closest kind, from the time of Columcille, and Adamnan, and the unknown Inmesach the Devout who in 721 established a law with the peace of Christ over the island of Ireland. In 697 the high-king with forty-seven kings of territories, and the abbot of Armagh with thirty-nine churchmen from all Ireland, assembled according to an old comment "in the great meeting of the men of Erin when Adamnan's law was set on the Gael (a law which he was said to have brought with him from Iona, giving the right to levy certain contributions), and the women were freed by Adamnan and Finachta the Festive and by the chiefs of Erin moreover." By the convention at Tír dá glas near the Shannon (737) between the high-king and the king of Munster "the Law of Patrick held Ireland;" which Keating interprets as the conference "at which the Law (*reacht*), and Right (*dlighi*), and Rent (*cíos*) of Patrick were ordered over Ireland by them." Assuredly the congress in 780 of the synods of the Uí Neill and the Leinstermen in the "town of Tara," where were several anchorites and scribes over whom Dubhliltu was president (probably abbot of Finglas), was occupied with questions of common interest. So also the assembly in 804 of senators of the Uí Neill under the high-king Áed Oirnidhe, "a soldier who shunned not battles." The Four Masters relate that he "assembled a very great army to proceed into Leinster, which he devastated twice in one month. A full muster of the men of Ireland (except the Leinstermen), both laity and clergy, was again made by the king, who marched to Dún-cuair, on the confines of Meath and Leinster. Thither came Connmach, successor of Patrick, having the clergy of Leth Cuinn along with him. It was not pleasing to the clergy to go upon any expedition; they complained of their grievance to the king, who said that he would abide by the award of Fothad na Canoine; on which occasion Fothad passed the decision by which he exempted the clergy of Ireland for ever from expeditions and hostings." Again in 858 there was a royal assembly of

the nobles of Ireland at Rahugh in Meath, where the king of Tara with the successor of Patrick and of Finnén of Clonard, established peace and concord between the men of Ireland. And Cerbhall king of Ossory gave the award of the congregation and successor of Patrick. There was the same common action when in 886 " an epistle came with the pilgrim to Ireland with the Law of Sunday," in the strictest terms for " the ox and the bondman and bondwoman on whom wrongful bondage is inflicted on Sunday, the eyes of all of them shed towards God tears of blood, for God has freed that day for them all." Along with decrees against sweeping floors, washing, cooking, grinding, shooting, or riding on that day, it was ordered that in every meeting or assembly of *tuatha* and kings the law of Sunday should be first enacted (13).

For about a hundred years (727–836) the Annals note the promulgation of " Laws " of various saints—such as " the Law of Cíarán," " of Brenainn," " of Columcille," and above all " the Law of Patrick "—all these being laws to authorize the collection of tribute in provinces or kingdoms by the successor of the saint. The Law of Patrick was decreed by the high-king, and in 734 was enforced by carrying the relics of Peter and Paul and Patrick on circuit, so that in 737 it was stated that " the Law of Patrick held all Ireland." On occasions where it was promulgated in Connacht this was done by the archbishop of Armagh and the king of Connacht, as in 783 ,789, 811, 825, and 836. Once more the " Law " was declared over Munster (823) by authority of its king Feidlimid and the bishop of Armagh. Over the north and middle districts of Ireland the " Law of Columcille " was proclaimed by decree of the high-king, by the abbot of Iona, or by their united action; three issues of this " Law " are mentioned between 752 and 778. There is mention of only one " Law " of a saint of Munster—Ailbhe of Emly—which was doubtless ordered by the king of Munster. The " Laws " for the

Connacht saints—Cíarán, Brenainn, Daire, Cornan, and Aedán—concerned generally "the three divisions" of Connacht—Connacht, Oriel, and Breifne—and were issued by the king of Connacht.

These Laws of "tribute" were not, in the new development of the monasteries, ecclesiastical questions alone. They concerned the claims of great corporations in trade and industry, powerful in local government, lying on boundaries of states, and even of disputed territories of the high-kings.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XV.

(1) P. 276. Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 15. In Great Britain there were four dedications to her, in south Scotland, Cumberland and Yorkshire.
(2) P. 276. Traditional memories of Brigit may be found in Carmichael's "Carmen Gadelica."
(3) P. 276. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," No. 51.
(4) P. 277. For roads see "Cormac's Glossary," pp. 141–142.
(5) P. 277. O'Curry: "Manners & Customs," III, pp. 259, 268.
(6) P. 278. O'Grady: "Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts," p. 81.
(7) P. 278. *Ib.*, p. 384.
(8) P. 278. *Ériu*, II, p. 172.
(9) P. 278. Stokes: "Life of Moling I."
(10) P. 278. "Silva Gadelica," II, 148.
(11) P. 279. "Marianus, who was the informant of Ptolemy, was a trader. Is it not possible the cities mentioned by the latter, which have not been identified, were the Assemblies, which must have been familiar to all foreign merchants engaged in trade with Ireland?" (Eoin MacNeill.)
(12) P. 281. "It would seem that the nobles and the general body of citizens conferred separately, from the description of the *aonach* of Tír Conaill, held in 1593, on the occasion of the abdication of Hugh O'Donnell. The *aonach* in question was convened to appoint a successor to the old chieftain. 'The nobles withdrew to a place apart and chose the chief' (Red Hugh). Then they returned and made their choice known to the general Assembly which ratified their decision. This *aonach* is of late date and took place in a very troubled time, so it is impossible to accept it as typical. It affords evidence, however, that the general body of citizens had a voice in the government, and also that the nobles conferred in a separate body" (Eoin MacNeill). The

"Vision of Adamnanus" describes Adamnan "preaching to the Assembly of the men of Ireland" (Stokes: "Irische Texte," I, p. 193). He brought his Law to the Assembly, proposed it there and it was considered and adopted. The importance given to the Assembly may be seen in "Cormac's Instructions," a great part of which deals with the right way of conducting an Assembly. See also d'Arbois de Jubainville: "Les Assemblées publiques d'Irlande"; Boni: "History of the Roman Forum" (translated by Sir Horace Plunkett).

(13) P. 287. In 886 the Annals of Ulster record that "an epistle came with the pilgrim to Ireland, with the Cain Domnach and other good instructions." This *Cain Domnach* is a genuine document, as is proved by the mention in the text of the "invasions of a race of pagans" as punishment for any breach of the Sabbath; it forbids Assemblies as well as all amusements on Sunday. It was proposed as a civil law with fines set forth to be inflicted for any breach of its regulations. "Every Assembly which is convoked by the *tuath* . . . let the Law of Sunday be the first law that is enacted therein." This supplies ample proof that there was legislation at the Assemblies. For the Law of Sunday see *Ériu*, II, p. 189.

CHAPTER XVI

NORTH AND SOUTH

The North

The Middle Irish tract on the Settling of the Manor of Tara gives the traditional character of the Five Fifths of Ireland: "knowledge in the west, battle in the north, prosperity in the east, music in the south, kingship in the centre." "Her battles also," it goes on, "and her contentions, her hardihood, her rough places, her strifes, her unprofitableness, her pride, her captures, her assaults, her hardness, her wars, her conflicts, from the northern part in the north."

Throughout the seventh and eighth centuries there was little change in the political history of Munster and Connacht lying within their settled boundaries; nor in that of Leinster, the diminished province which from the first settlement of the high-kingship was hard set to hold up its borders against both the kings of Tara and the kings of Cashel. The case of northern Ireland was very different. The Fifth once governed by the famous race of Emain Macha had very early been broken into three main divisions. Cormac had entered on the eastern territory north of the Boyne; the three Collas had invaded Airgíalla (Oriel) and wrecked Emain Macha; sons of Niall of the Nine Hostages had conquered the west as far as the Atlantic—In Fochla, with its capital at Ailech. In their compact territory the Uí Neill held together for two hundred years; their chief king being at one time of the line of Conall Gulban; at another of that of his twin brother Eógan. The Cenél

Conaill, entrenched in the natural fastness of the Donegal highlands, maintained a vigorous independence. The Cenél nEógain, with their advantage of position, extended their power east and south; when Tara and Ailenn and Crúachu ceased to be used for military encampments Ailech was still occupied by its warlike kings. In the battle of Moindaire-Lothair (560) they won from the Picts the territory west of the Bann, and in spite of accepting aid from the Cenél Conaill in the fight the Cenél nEógain kept the territory as their own, with a frontier colony of their kindred represented in later times by the family of Ó Cathain (O'Kane). Slowly spreading south into Oriel they by degrees cut off the Cenél Conaill from expansion (1).

The Uí Neill kings of the north-west were a race of extraordinary ability, who throughout the centuries sent out in long succession highly gifted kings, warriors, counsellors, leaders of learning. But they had no easy task. The very same configuration of the ground which, as we have seen, enabled them to break up so rapidly the old Fifth, made its reunion impossible. There were leading high-ways from south to north, but wide areas of hill and water and forest absolutely blocked the ways east and west, as may be seen to-day by any wayfarer who traces the passes that led by river-beds, bogs, and old wooded marshes across that difficult territory. The wide and complicated area of the old Fifth was inevitably occupied by contending peoples, broken states, warlike, distracted, and recalcitrant. A perpetual danger arose from the raiders on the coast, who from the earliest times foreshadowed the terrors of the Norse pirates.

It was on this eastern region of Ulster that the raids of the sea-pirates had fallen, before the time of S. Patrick and ever since. Beyond Loch Neagh, with its hundred and fifty-three square miles of stormy water and surrounding forests, lay four independent states very loosely bound together—Dál nAraide, Conaille, Dál Ríata, and the land of the Ulaid. Dál nAraide and Conaille

were kingdoms of the Cruithne or Picts. Dál Ríata, once the most important of the states, had before 470 A.D. sent colonies oversea to Alba, and as the centre of government gradually shifted the kings crossed to their new dominion, and from there ruled the Irish territory for two hundred years under their dynastic title of kings of Dál Ríata. The battle of Mag Rath decided their fate in Ireland. "The present condition of the dynasty of Dál Ríata," wrote Adamnan about the year 690, "is such as would draw groans and tears from those who witness it." The decaying kingdom became at last almost extinct, and was possibly made tributary either to the neighbouring Picts or to the northern Uí Neill, whose territory had been extended to the Bann. After the eighth century it was hardly more than a geographical term in the Annals, and with the Norse invasions it disappeared altogether. The king of the Ulaid was for centuries called in the Annals king of the "Fifth of Conchobor," though his rule never reached west of Loch Neagh. The "Ulidians" were in fact a mere remnant represented by a single petty kingdom, the dynastic name of which was Dál Fiatach (2)—a dynasty which indeed made no genealogical claim to be of the conquering race, but regarded their line as descendants of Ded son of Sen, in other words of the race of the Erainn. The little kingdom maintained its borders against Oriel, Dál Ríata, and the Picts of Dál nAraide and Conaille till the Norse wars; when their ruling family fell into obscurity for a time, and the Picts of Dál nAraide set up a claim to represent the old "Ulidian race," and prepared suitable genealogies, tracing their descent from heroes of the *Táin*. But until the ninth or tenth centuries no confusion was possible between the Dál nAraide and the "Ulidians." S. Malachy's account of that part of Ulster in his days shows that it must have relapsed into a condition of semi-barbarism. In Norman times De Courcy's occupation brought the rule and record of the Ulaid to an end.

The north and east coast lay at all times open to warlike raids—refugees flying from British shores, Irish war-bands taking a hand in battles across the narrow seas (3). A brief journey carried to Ireland Picts of Galloway, or those who had now reached the northern boundary of Argyle. As the Picts pressed southward they completely displaced the power of the Irish settlers in north Wales, and dominated the descendants of the Irish in south Wales. Ejected Britons were found fighting in Ireland. In 682 A.D. they joined with the Picts of Antrim in war. The English king Ecgfrith, in spite of advice not to attack Ireland, "which had done him no harm," sent an army in 684, which miserably wasted that harmless nation always most friendly to the English. "In their hostile rage," says Bede, "they spared not even the churches or monasteries." The contemporary Irish chronicler says briefly: "The English devastated the plain of Brega and many churches in the month of June." The "islanders to the utmost of their power repelled force with force"; but the "Saxons" ravaged Mag Breg, sparing neither churches nor monasteries, and carrying away captives in the old pirate fashion. In 696 Mag Muirthemne, the district of Dundalk, was devastated by Britons in alliance with the "Ulidians"; in 702 the "Ulidians" were fighting the Britons, victorious over "the enemy of God's churches." The same year Irgalach, king of Brega, was slain on Ireland's Eye by a party of raiding Britons (4). In 709 Britons were fighting in the service of a king of Leinster. In 711 and again in 717 forces of Britons were defeated by Dál Ríata. For over thirty years roving fleets raided the Irish sea, but after this British invasions are no longer heard of.

In this troubled time the power of Columcille had descended to Adamnan, also of the race of Conall Gulban, born probably in the parish of Drumhome among the mountains of Donegal (5). "The noble sage of the western world," he equalled Columcille in his immense

labours and journeyings. Monk at Iona before 652, abbot in 679 and head of the *familia* in Ireland, he probably spent nearly half the rest of his life till 704 in his own country, adviser of kings, reconciler of peoples, leader of assemblies and synods. He was a friend in youth, and later spiritual director of the high-king Fínachta the Festive, grandson of Áed Sláine. Finachta (675–695) appears in legend as gay, cool, swiftly resolute at need. He entered on the heritage of the old border wars. In the first year of his reign he fought and defeated the men of Leinster. But he remitted the tax—the Boromean tribute which, it was boasted, forty kings before him had levied (6). As a prince of the southern line he doubtless knew the situation on the spot; but in bardic story he lost honour among the Úí Neill of the north, and Adamnan was said to have shared their indignation against "the old grey king without teeth." There must have been some dispute when Fínachta refused to the Columcille monasteries the same privileges of collecting tribute as those of Patrick, Finnén, and Cíarán—possibly an affair of local politics in the middle kingdom.

Adamnan certainly remained Fínachta's counsellor. King Aldfrith of Northumbria (685), probably of Irish descent through his mother, had been an exile or refugee in Ireland, known there as Flann Fina. Adamnan at the people's prayer visited "his friend" in Northumbria to demand the captives taken in 684, and a pledge that no Saxon should ever again go on a predatory expedition to Ireland. He brought back the sixty prisoners; and it was possibly in remembrance of this deliverance that Finachta in 685 "entered into religion," or "went on his pilgrimage," and came again after a year to his kingship. In 688 Adamnan was sent on a second embassy to the Northumbrian court, and went thence to the celebrated monastery of Jarrow, where Ceolfrid was abbot—a visit which profoundly affected his later life.

Adamnan was there plunged into the controversy opened at the synod of Whitby (7) in 664 as to the mode of calculating Easter by the position of the moon,* a computation of greater scientific accuracy according to the astronomers than the older system used in Patrick's time. In the south of Ireland, long in close communication with Gaul, there had been no difficulty; and a brief discussion (630–633) ended in consent to the new Roman cycle and rules for Easter. The clergy of the northern half sent a letter to Rome in 640 explaining their reasons for maintaining their old custom; and papal exhortations had no effect. Among the Scots of Dál Ríata and the Picts converted by Columcille the influence of Iona was dominant. In Northumbria while bishop Áedán lived all controversy was silenced by the force of his conspicuous holiness and charity (*c.* 634–651); but after his death priests trained in Gaul insistently pressed that the Roman rules for the Paschal feast and the tonsure of the clergy were to be preferred before "all the traditions of the Scots." At Whitby in 664 the English priest Wilfrid, who as a youth had been trained at Lindisfarne, took the leading part, with Agilbert bishop of Paris. The Columban monks and bishop Colmán from Iona, much loved for his singular discretion, adhered to "the tradition of the Scots." Irish teaching had been known to Wilfrid as a boy in his schooling at Lindisfarne; to the Gaul Agilbert probably not at all; and to neither in its national significance. Wilfrid enforced his argument for uniformity with an imperial pride and racial contempt which left a long and evil memory. The Scots, he said, and their accomplices in obstinacy, Picts and Britons, with foolish labour, in these two remote islands of the world, opposed all the rest of the universe. Colmán again appealed to the tradition of their own forefathers, "men beloved of God," and the example of S. John, "the disciple specially beloved," who was "thought

* See note, p. 308.

worthy to lay his head on our Lord's bosom." If John followed the custom of the Mosaic law, Wilfrid argued, Peter observed the custom of the gospel. Colmán urged the lofty tradition of Columcille and his successors, whose life, discipline, and sanctity he could not question. "Concerning your father Columba and his followers, whose sanctity you say you imitate," retorted Wilfrid bluntly, ". . . I might answer that when many on the day of judgment shall say to our Lord that in His name they prophesied . . . our Lord will reply that He never knew them." With slighting words as to "rustic simplicity" and the "small number in one corner of a very remote island," he concluded: "And if that Columba of yours (and I may say, ours also, if he were Christ's) was a holy man and powerful in miracles, yet should he be preferred before the most blessed prince of the apostles to . . . whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given?" Upon this king Oswiu asked of Colmán, "Can you show any such power given to your Columba?" Colmán answered, "None." "And I also say unto you," the king concluded, "that he is that doorkeeper whom I will not contradict . . . lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of Heaven there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is admitted to have the keys."

It was a year of terror, of eclipse and plague, when Colmán returned to Hii (664) to consult with his people. The acrimonious temper and racial hostility of Wilfrid had cut a deep rift between peoples so lately united in fellowship. As there was not then a single bishop in England who was not a Scot, or ordained by a Scot, Wilfrid, refusing to acknowledge any consecration of Columban bishops, went in 665 to be "honourably consecrated" by the bishop of Paris. He returned from Gaul as bishop of York, with a train of builders and teachers of every art, and an authority that vied with that of king Ecgfrith (8). He had under him thousands of monks, and in his household great numbers of children

to be brought up as clerks, or as secular nobles in the service of the king. His retinue as he rode was like a royal army in numbers and the splendour of vesture and equipments. He lavished gifts from what seemed boundless wealth. Once he entertained Ecgfrith in a feast that lasted three days and three nights. As against this pomp stood the monastery of Lindisfarne, with its new bishop Eata, a pupil of Áedán himself, who refused ever to leave it. The tradition of Columcille was faithfully preserved. At Iona the coming of a guest needed no extra provision, it meant only that the monks renounced a fast for their usual meagre fare. So at Lindisfarne there was no need to provide entertainment for the great men of the world, for none resorted there except to pray. The king himself came only with five or six servants, and after his devotions departed, sharing perhaps the hard and scanty meal of the brethren. No money was held in the monastery; all was given to the poor. For the whole care of these teachers, Bede records, was to serve God, not the world. In 667, Colmán, taking with him all the Scots at Lindisfarne and thirty of the English nation, departed from Britain to Hii, and thence to the little island of Inisbofin off the wild Connemara coast—as far as it was possible to go into the western sea. To avert dissensions, or to relieve the English from the excessive austerity of winter life in the Atlantic, Colmán travelled far to find a suitable place for a monastery; and ultimately, leaving the Scots in the island, transported the English to form a new monastery at Mayo, which a hundred years later had grown into a large and flourishing settlement of English inhabitants.

In 673 a great council held by the archbishop of Canterbury practically severed all connection between the English and the Scot churches. While Iona stood resolutely aloof, its abbot Adamnan, on his embassy to Northumbria in 688, visited the new monastery of Jarrow, founded by Ecgfrith about 680. Close to Wear-

mouth, Jarrow was in the centre of the Roman revival in England, then at the height of its enthusiasm. Foreign workmen had been brought over to build churches of solid masonry after the Roman manner, others to make glass windows unknown before in England, Roman chantors to teach the order and manner of singing and reading aloud at each festival of the year, foreign painters to decorate the walls with visions of the Virgin and Apostles and the last Doom; collections of books were brought by indefatigable travellers to Rome. The new buildings, the hundreds of monks, the royal favour, the gifts of broad lands, were in vivid contrast to the ascetic community at Lindisfarne, with their church of hewn oak in Irish fashion, of old measurements supposed to have been handed down from the apostles. His visit to Jarrow convinced Adamnan that the custom of the Roman calculation of Easter and the form of the tonsure should be accepted. He was in Ireland at least five times, if not more, in ten years (687–697); and may have opened his Easter controversy in 692. From 697 to 704 he seems to have remained seven years in the country, traversing the whole north on his Paschal mission, and winning the clergy outside the Columban *familia*.

The long controversy only came to an end when all the leaders in it lay dead. Adamnan in 704 made his last journey in the summer to Iona to die there. His kinsman, the high-king Loingsech with his three sons, had been slain in battle in 703. His friend Aldfrith the Wise died in 704. On the death of Brude (678–706)—the greatest of the Pict kings since the Brude converted by Columcille—Naiton his successor broke away from the traditional alliance of the Picts with the Irish, and inaugurated a new union with "the land of the Angles" in 710. Wilfrid ended his stormy and chequered career in 709. Only after his disappearance was reconciliation with the followers of "that Columba of yours" made possible, by a man of spiritual genius not unworthy of

Columcille himself—an English noble Ecgberht who had studied for years in Ireland, " in that age the prime seat of learning in all Christendom." After the Irish fashion he made a vow for God's sake to lead the pilgrim's life, so as never to return to Britain. Famous for the perfection of his teaching, for his humility, simplicity, justice, and extreme austerity, he was alike a benefactor to Scots and Picts. When at seventy-six years of age he journeyed to Iona on his mission of peace the monks, won by his virtue and spiritual force, accepted in 716 the new Paschal system; and till his death in 729 Ecgberht remained in the home of Columcille and Adamnan.

In the midst of the Paschal controversy Adamnan was renowned for his social reforms. In 697 he held, along with Loingsech the high-king, of his own kin of Conall Gulban, the famous synod at Tara for " the Law of the Innocents," where according to an account, probably of the ninth century, " the first law made in heaven and on earth for women and their emancipation " was decreed by an Assembly of which ninety-one names are given—an accurate list so far as it can be tested (9).

There is nothing in Irish history or legend to warrant the gruesome picture given in this ninth-century story of women slaughtering one another on the battlefield. The " Law of the Innocents " itself refers for the most part to affairs of ordinary civil life, and includes children and young clerical students alike in its protection. Possibly women who held land in their own right may till then have been held liable to provide a force for the hostings of the nobles and kingly families, and may have been freed from this necessity. Women of free station were, it would seem, given the right of witness or testimony, and possibly some increased rights in property. Strict penalties were fixed for every injury inflicted by any man on a woman, by cattle or hound, by negligence as to ditch and pit and bridge and fire-

place, door-step and pools and kilns. No woman was to be employed by any man in an assault, and in case of an attack on a woman by a hosting, or a group of men, they were duly fined, "since a mother is a venerable treasure, a mother is a goodly treasure, and the sin is great when anyone slays the mother of Christ, and her who carries the spindle and who clothes every one." It is probable that the "bondage of the cauldron" may have been forbidden, according to which the slave-woman who stood deep in the earth-pit turning the great spit for the dinner, and made the candles which she carried on her palm till division of food and liquor and making of beds was ended, had herself "no share in bag or basket," and by some old pagan tradition "dwelt in a hut outside the enclosure, lest bane from sea or land should come to her chief."

"To thee thenceforward it is given to free the women of the western world," was the legend told of the charge of Adamnan's mother to her son: but years passed before his decision was declared in 697 on the plain of Birr. A story went that the high-king Loingsech led the resistance of the kings: "It shall not be in my time if it is done. An evil time when a man's sleep shall be murdered by women, that women should live, men should be slain." In fact, however, Loingsech headed the list of forty-seven kings who with a long roll of saints and ecclesiastics decreed the law, under the securities of sun and moon and all other elements of God: of the apostles, and thirty-three special holy men of older times; and the intercession of all the men of Ireland both laymen and clerics. It would seem that only two ecclesiastics from the north took part in this synod, the abbots of Armagh and Bangor. This great gathering to promote the "law of Adamnan" became one of the leading precedents in judicial cases where the king, to serve the common good, claimed power to exercise special and unusual authority in matters of religion.

There can be no doubt that the Paschal controversy

weakened the power of the Columcille tradition in Ireland in proportion to the strength it added to the authority of Armagh. Derry was far removed from affairs in the rest of Ireland, and probably remained as in the saint's time a poor little unenclosed church with one priest serving perhaps a fishing and seafaring laity. Durrow, established as a centre of peace in the borderland, lay in the middle battlefield of the provinces, between the two powerful monasteries of Clonmacnois and Clonard. The repeated journeys of Columcille himself throughout the middle and west of Ireland seem to indicate the extension of his influence; and yet more the incessant labours and synods of Adamnan abbot of Iona a hundred years later. That political problems arose may be supposed from a proclamation of the high-king Fínachta (675–695) that the lands of Columcille should not enjoy the same privileges as those of Patrick, Finnén, and Cíarán. But between 752 and 758 the "Law of Columcille" was proclaimed throughout the north and middle of Ireland, by the high-king, by the abbot of Iona, and by both authorities together. Durrow must have become of considerable secular or trading importance when in a battle with Clonmacnois (764) two hundred of its *familia* were slain; when it was involved (776) in the conflict between the Uí Neill and the men of Munster; when its termon was burned to the door of the church by the Munster king Feidlimid (833), and three years later was ravaged by the "Genti." The very important site of Kells in the wealthy plain of Brega, under the shadow of Tara and Tailtiu, was secured in or perhaps before 804, when it was given "without battle to Columcille the musical." The old church was destroyed, and the building of a new church begun in 807 and finished in seven years—possibly the still standing church with the priest's chamber in the high-gabled roof, so called "of Columcille." The Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells remain the glorious memorials of the Columban *familia* at this time.

Meanwhile all changes, political or ecclesiastical, tended alike to increase the growing importance of Armagh. Oriel, once the centre of power of the old Fifth of Ulster, lay across the passage of the kings of Ailech to the capital of the high-kingship at Tara. It was in theory under a king, but no line or dynasty of rulers is known to have existed there. The region was jealously watched by the Uí Neill, and gradually overrun; the site of Emain and the hill of Ard-macha were already encroached upon by the Cenél nEógain about 600 A.D. Their main object doubtless was to push their dominion over the *parochia Patricii*, the "apostolic town," with its monastery and famous school, and its growing claims, as the ecclesiastical centre of Ireland, to jurisdiction over all churches and monasteries, rights of visitation, of calling up causes and perhaps of appeal (10). The purpose of the Ailech dynasty to hold Armagh in their control and draw Oriel under their dominion at last broke down all resistance in the battle of Leth Camm (827) won by Niall Caille, king of Ailech and afterwards king of Ireland (11). From this time all but a fraction of Oriel became tributary to Ailech.

The lands and authority of Armagh, however, were beginning to stretch far beyond the bounds of Ulster. The *moen* or manager of the monastic territories was a very important person. The Annals preserve the names of administrators of "Patrick's people" in Brega, "south of the mountain" (Slíab Fúait)—such as Feidlimid, "abbot of Kilmoone and steward of Breg on the part of Patrick, an eminent anchorite and most excellent scribe" († 814); Mael Patrick, abbot, famous scribe and sage, and steward († 888); Maelabhar, called in the Four Masters "chief judge of Leth Cuinn" († 894); Cernagh abbot of Dunleer and steward of the *familia* of Armagh from the Blackwater and Boyne to the sea († 922); Muirchertach in 924—tanist-abbot of Armagh, high steward of the Uí Neill of the south, and successor of Buite, the head of counsel of all the men of Breg,

lay and clerical; Tuathal, scribe and bishop and steward of Patrick "south of the mountain" († 929).

In debating therefore the "northern part of the north, her hardness and her wars," we should justly consider not only the perils of her situation and the local problems of her peoples, but the quality of their independence, and the character of the Uí Neill kings. As we have seen in the Paschal controversy, the national Irish feeling was here intense, different from the more local patriotism of the south; the fidelity of the north to the cause of self-government was no less marked in the eighth century than in the eighteenth. Out of their ceaseless dangers and troubles the peoples of the north had created two conspicuous religious centres—Iona and Armagh—of exalted national fervour and spiritual faith. The royal race had a stiff fight to restore the old Fifth. When military forces had long disappeared from other ancient capitals, the very hard-driven kings of Tír Eógain were still entrenched in Ailech. In the eleventh century the name of their old domestic territory had been transferred eastward to the modern "Tyrone," which was formerly the central part of Oriel; and the old Tír Eógain, now called Inishowen, with the fort of Ailech, passed into the dominion of the kings of Tír Conaill. From their new centre the Uí Neill opened a new defence of Ireland.

The South

A curious contrast may be noted between the kings of Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga. In the north no king, leader in war and high executor of the laws, was ever an ecclesiastic: on the other hand he never lacked counsel of wise men of the Church, learned in the national tradition. In the south, on the contrary, there were at least four ecclesiastics crowned kings, not wholly to the advantage of that state.

The high-kings had not yet solved the problem of the

south—the old conflict between Conn's Half and the Half of Mogh—a dispute going back to the ancient myth of a supposed Éber and Éremón who had divided the island between them, Éber taking all south of the Escir Ridge from the Boyne to Galway, and Éremón the north. There was no legal authority to settle the dispute. The "synthetic historians" did not insist that a single kindred had always held the high-kingship in Ireland: they admitted into their fancy lists kings before Niall, of other families and races, among them ancestors of the kings of Cashel; but for the most part kings of Cashel and Tara held the fabled succession. In the absence of legal tradition the matter was practically left to the soldier, with its complications of sovereignty which each *ardrí* was bound to secure to the "king of Ireland" and not by his default allow to pass over to the king of Cashel.

In the southern province, protected by the Ocean and the Shannon, and to the north guarded by the passionate independence of Leinster which broke the force of every invader, the Cashel kings were apparently content to consolidate their authority at home without seeking to extend it beyond bounds fixed in the fifth century. From old time it was a wealthy land (12). The bog of Cullen in Tipperary must have been an ancient centre of goldwork, where families of goldsmiths or *Cerdraighe* were famous for generations; in Co. Limerick a townland is still known as "Baile na g-Ceard," the town of goldsmiths. Not far from the bog are Silvermines and Meanns. Distinguished services were rendered to the king from his territories. His doctors were furnished him by the *Dáil Mughaidhe* in Tipperary; his harpers by the *Corcoidhe* in the county of Limerick; his *Cerds*, or gold and silversmiths, and his *Umhaidhe*, or bronze workers, from the *Cerdraighe;* the steward of his milch-cows and dairies from the *Boinraighe;* his poets and scholars from the *Muscraige* of Ely on the Shannon; and so on. In the "Book of Rights" the traditional

tributes payable to the king of Cashel far exceed those to which any of the other six principal kings in Ireland laid claim. The traditional glories of Munster are recalled in the Middle Irish tale of the Settling of Tara—her fairs, her nobles, her subtlety, her melody, her minstrelsy, her learning, her teaching, her poetical art, her code, her fertility.

The over-king at Cashel had under him nineteen dependent states, seven free ruled by princes of the Eóganachta, and twelve tributary, their rulers not being of that lineage (13). Ossory was continually reckoned as a part of Munster, but the claim was never established. The supremacy of Cashel was for a time challenged by Eóganacht kings of the western region; in particular by Áed Bennan who died in 619, and who seems to have grouped under his authority the western states in opposition to Fingen king of Cashel. This dispute was perhaps compromised when his daughter, Mór Mumhan ("Mór of Munster," † 632) (14), became the wife of Fingen and ancestress of the most numerous family in Ireland, the O'Sullivans. After this the only troubles we hear of were the rival ambitions fought out on the borderlands of Leinster and Meath, where the kings of Cashel and the Uí Neill were in conflict over questions of sovereignty due to the "king of Ireland" or the king of Cashel. The debate on the symbols of obedience was renewed with every generation in the form of tributes or hostages. Every reign brought its assertion of "rights." In 707 the high-king Congal led a hosting on Leinster. In 721 Fergal the *ardrí* marched from Ailech to exact the *bóroma* and "wasted" the country; a year later he encamped at Almain on the Curragh, a fort famous in the legends of Finn, and set up his pavilion on the hill. Tradition tells of the night before the battle—a night filled with music, festivity, and merriment, when the king slept not for the awful violence of the December tempest, and for dread of the Leinster men. In the fight of the next day he was defeated and

slain, and the victorious army of Leinster celebrated that night in the desolate Almain camp with the triumphant feasting and song of their own people.

A new king meanwhile had risen at Cashel, the first to challenge the authority of the Uí Neill (15). An Old-Irish verse recounts the glory of his name: "the powerful blessing of Patrick which he had given to Oengus had descended to the renowned Cathal—a strong and mighty king who overthrew peoples" (16). In 733 he proposed to assert his power by usurping the prerogative of the high-king to preside over the Assembly of Tailtiu. He chose for his venture the critical time when the Uí Neill were reforming their old system of succession to the high-kingship. The southern Uí Neill had turned out the house of Áed Sláine in 727: in 734 the houses of Tír Conaill and Tír Eógain were engaged in their last desperate strife, when Áed Aldan king of Ailech drove Flaithbertach, the last high-king from Tír Conaill into a monastery, and established his own line in sole power. In that year Cathal marched to Tailtiu. But even in this time of perilous confusion his pretensions to assume the place of high-king were forcibly opposed, and he was driven from Tailtiu by Domnall king of Meath, representing the royal line of the Clann Cholmáin of the southern Uí Neill. The name of Cathal notwithstanding was afterwards included by some writers in the list of monarchs of Ireland—the first actual claimant from the South. His next effort in 735 to annex Leinster by help of the men of Ossory ended in a fierce battle, where the king of Ossory was killed while the king of Cashel escaped alive. In 737 Cathal met the new *ardrí*, Áed Aldan of Ailech, in a great royal Assembly at Tír dá glas (Terryglass) the "land of the two streams." "The Law of Patrick held Ireland," is the record of the assembly; perhaps there was an agreement between the two kings for north and south. The problem of the disputed border was raised anew on the death of the Leinster king Fáelan in 738. In the obstinate battle of

Ballyshannon in West Offaly, where Áed Aldan met the king of Leinster in single combat, the race of Conn "enjoyed a signal victory," whilst with unwonted measure they routed and trampled on their adversaries, so that more of the Leinster men are reported to have fallen than had ever perished in any one onslaught of preceding ages. Cathal apparently avenged himself by a hosting on the Leinstermen when he carried off hostages and great spoil. His death in 742, and that of Áed Aldan slain in battle with the southern Uí Neill at Kells in 743, ended for many years the duel of north and south for authority. During the long reign (770–797) of the high-king Donnchad of the southern Uí Neill there are only two conflicts recorded in the Annals. For seven days in 770 Donnchad defiantly encamped on Rath Alinne near Kilcullen (now known as Knockaulin), to collect the royal tribute due at the opening of a new reign; and when the men of Leinster "eluded him," burnt all their borders with fire. In almost the last year of his reign (795) he led a hosting "in aid of the Leinstermen against the Munstermen." But in effect the fight for supremacy opened by king Cathal had ceased on his death.

In recounting these conflicts, spread over a couple of hundred years, it will be seen that before the Danish wars the number of battles or so-called "wars" is not prodigious—some six or eight in each century. It must also not be forgotten that no heat of local strife prevented the summoning, even by contending kings, of general assemblies of north and south on affairs of general concern; as at Tír dá glas, and on many later occasions. The first recorded ecclesiastic-king, Ólchobor, scribe and anchorite, died in 796, the period when the Norse pirates first fell on Ireland. The centuries were closing when Munster, prosperous and protected, steadily increased in power; and advanced pretensions, whether by arms of her kings, or theories of her synthetic historians, or verses of her court-poets, to claim at least

an equal share with the Uí Neill in the lordship of Ireland. Her position was favoured by special influences —the wealth that came from her sheltered state, long continental intercourse, freedom from raiding fleets of pirates, and pride in the extraordinary array of great monastic centres of learning and trading, from Tallaght to Clonmacnois, that distinguished southern Ireland.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XVI.

(1) P. 291. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 70; "Phases of Irish History," pp. 185, 278.
(2) P. 292. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 13, 70.
(3) P. 293. Kuno Meyer: "Fianaigecht." Maeluma, surnamed the rough or fierce, son of Baedan of Ulster († 572) led a *fian* from Ireland to assist his Scottish kinsmen in the battle of Degsastan in 603.
(4) P. 293. Reeves: "Adamnan's Life of Columcille," pp. liii–liv. See also Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," No. 63.
(5) P. 293. For Adamnan see Reeves: "Adamnan's Life of Columcille, Introductory Life of Adamnan." Also Bede ("Church Historians," pp. 515 *seq.*).
(6) P. 294. Reeves: "Adamnan," pp. lviii, xlix; "Silva Gadelica," II, 401, 440–441.
(7) P. 295. For the Synod of Whitby see Bede ("Church Historians," I, pt. ii, pp. 426 *seq.*).
(8) P. 296. See J. R. Green: "The Making of England," pp. 374–375.
(9) P. 299. For the Law of the Innocents see *Cain Adamnain* an Old-Irish Treatise on the Law of Adamnan. Edited and Translated by Kuno Meyer ("Anecdota Oxoniensia," Mediaeval and Modern Series, Part XII. Oxford 1905).
(10) P. 302. Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," pp. 224–226.
(11) P. 302. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," pp. 277 *seq.*
(12) P. 304. O'Curry: "Manners and Customs," III, pp. 205–208. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," Nos. 142 and 143.
(13) P. 305. Eoin MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 75 *seq.*
(14) P. 305. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 237.
(15) P. 306. *Ib.*, p. 237.
(16) P. 306. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," No. 6.

* Dr. MacNeill has a paper on the Calendar of Coligny in *Ériu* (X, pp. 1 *seq.*), giving his evidence for the view that this Calendar was the work of druids, and that the basis of its chronography and the key to some of its apparent arcana is Pliny's statement that the druids began

their months and years with the sixth night of the moon. I wrote to ask whether there could be any background of ancient lore to the Paschal controversy in northern Ireland, apart from the immediate ecclesiastical dispute. His answer may prove interesting :—

" No account of an Irish pre-Christian chronography has been found, even in any fragmentary detail. The reason is fairly obvious. Bede relates how, when the Roman Easter reckoning had begun to displace the ' cycle of 84,' Nechtan, king of the Picts, commanded the older reckoning to be expunged throughout his realm. All ancient chronographies were connected closely with religion. Even when Julius Caesar reformed the Roman Calendar he did so not as ruler of the Empire but as *pontifex maximus*. From Bede too we learn that nonconformity in matters of the calendar was regarded as almost equivalent to schism (though a century and a quarter earlier S. Columbanus had explicitly written that the Irish, while they maintained a reckoning not approved at Rome, had never had a single schismatic among them), and the Irish community left Lindisfarne rather than conform. A druidical computus must have been as thoroughly banned as a druidical rite, and so no detail of it has come into Irish writings.

" S. Columbanus writes (600 A.D.) to the Pope, Gregory the Great : ' Be it known to you that by our masters and by the ancient Irish, philosophers and most learned experts in the composition of chronography, Victorius has not been accepted but has been regarded as one to whom ridicule or indulgence rather than authority was due.' Victorius published his computus in 457 A.D. At that time or soon after it (early enough to be ' ancient ' in 600 A.D.), Ireland had men so skilled in chronography as to claim the respect of Columbanus, who had hardly a better in the Latin culture of his own time—so that they gave what people in his part of Ireland call ' a fool's pardon ' to the celebrated Victorius of Aquitaine. But, as I have pointed out in an unprinted paper which you have seen, we have no evidence of any high degree of Latin culture in general in Ireland until after the foundation of Clonard about 520 A.D. S. Patrick's writings and the ' Hymn ' of Secundinus, neither of them Irishmen, are the only specimens I can remember of Latin writings produced in Ireland before the influence of Menevia had worked. It should follow that the ' ancient philosophers and learned experts ' had a deeper and keener interest in chronography than in any other branch of Latin culture. This is intelligible if a number of them were converted druids, like Dubthach, or trained in druidical schools, like Fiacc, first native bishop in Leinster, and if they had already been accustomed to problems of chronography. Can any alternative explanation be suggested ? I think we may even say that the Irish tradition had no small part in making Bede a great authority in chronography.

" Among the evidences of the zeal for this study in the early Latin schools of Ireland are certain fabrications discussed by MacCarthy in his ' Introduction ' to the ' Annals of Ulster,' vol. IV, pp. cxv *seq*. One of these (p. cxvii) dates in 508 A.D., a second in 546 A.D. (p. cxviii), a third

in 556 A.D. (p. cxxiv). The third was able to impose on Columbanus, Bede, and other early computists (p. cxxxv).

"Direct evidence of a druidical computus in Ireland is no more to be expected in Irish literature than direct evidence of a druidical theology. The 'song of Amorgen,' the first druid in Ireland, according to the *Lebor Gabala*, contains a vague and veiled account of the claims of druidical science, which were perhaps no more than a tradition when the poem was composed. One of these claims is thus worded: 'Who can tell the ages of the moon?' Now every herdsman, every husbandman, and every fisherman, can tell the ages of the moon, especially in countries that have no printed calendars or other materials of reference which save modern educated peoples from using their powers of observation. Hence we must infer, when a knowledge of the ages of the moon is claimed as something special, that it means a quite different knowledge from that which is possessed by, let us say, the ordinary savage. I cannot think of any other meaning in this connection than knowledge of the moon's ages in relation to solar time, and this knowledge is the basis of every ancient system of chronography—the reckoning of the ratio between lunar and solar periods, so that by means of systematic adjustments the months, lunar periods, are made to retain what are thought to be their proper places in the solar year. The order of ritual worship made some form of this reckoning seem necessary for every ancient people who had a well-developed religious culture—for the Chinese, the Hindus, the Babylonians, the Hebrews, the Greeks. (The Romans, curiously enough, were the least skilled of all the great peoples of antiquity in this respect. And just as an old Roman general, when the sacred chickens refused him the desired augury, commanded them to be thrown overboard, so Julius Caesar solved the problem for Rome and for us by throwing the moon overboard and fossilizing the months.) The Coligny Calendar shows that the Gallic druids made provision for the same need, but druidism in Gaul was an offshoot of insular druidism, and the higher schools of druidism were insular in Caesar's time, as he testifies."

CHAPTER XVII

THE NORSE INVASION

Some twelve hundred years had passed after the first coming of the Celtic-speaking peoples to Ireland before a new storm of invasion broke on the island—the beginning of a succession of wars of conquest and foreign rule which lasted for eleven hundred years to come. In the past centuries the only strangers in direct contact with the Irish had been the Galli or Gauls of the Empire, so that the name "Gall" became synonymous with "foreigner" * : the word which in centuries of Christian intercourse had lost all harmful character, took on a new meaning when it was transferred to the fierce pagan raiders from the northern seas whose pirate fleets practically surrounded the island for two hundred years. The invading hosts called themselves Norsemen, or Northmen, as the northern branch in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, of a larger Teutonic people. At their first appearance the Irish only knew them as "the Heathen"—*Genti*. Later they called them Lochlannaigh, which Professor Marstrander explains as the men of Rogaland, an old division of Scandinavia. But their permanent title remained as the Foreigners or

* "There is a curious implication, not noticed in any writing known to me, in the fact that Galli, Gaill, became synonymous with 'foreigner.' Before the Norman invasion of England, none of the inhabitants of Britain, whether Picts, Britons, Anglo-Saxons, or Scots, are ever called Gaill in Irish. 'Baile Bricceni' (a curious piece of Irish Church History cast in the form of a prophecy, probably between 900 and 950) speaks of 'these two islands,' as being a kind of world apart." (Note by Eoin MacNeill.)

Gaill—Fingaill if they were the fair-haired Norwegians, Dubhgaill if they were the black-haired Danes. They marked the earliest threat of external forces gathering to break the free development of Irish civilization and government.

According to the Norwegian scholar Marstrander, in the seventh century Norse fishers and sea-farers had already landed on Irish coasts in their voyages among the islands of the northern seas. A chance mention in Bede (1) of a captive in war sold as a slave to a certain Frisian shows that the slave-trade was active as early as 679, and no doubt the Irish coasts were as frequently visited as the English by shrewd merchants, whether from the southern or the northern shores of the North Sea. So profitable indeed was this traffic in slaves that they maintained it till the thirteenth century.

The Scandinavians had their training in a hard school. Hemmed in between the ocean and the black forests and frozen lakes and highlands at their back, they were driven to the sea as fishers or as traders, with a thousand miles of coast to practise seamanship, sailing without compass against Arctic tempests. In a Norse saga we read of mariners from Iceland driven before the north wind in a heavy mist. One leader asked another if he could tell at all to what land they were likely to be near. "Many lands there are," said he, "which we might hit with the weather we have had—the Orkneys, or Scotland, or Ireland" (2). Need forced them to build better ships than other peoples and to use them with greater skill. Their pine-woods supplied them with timber for stout vessels, and from the mines of Upsala they had iron and copper for the chains and anchors of their ships, for their heavy swords, their spear and arrow points and head-pieces and shields, and all the armour which was later the wonder and admiration of the Irish. Legend and poems preserved the memory of their stature and strength; "tall men urge the ships": one word served alike for "giant" or "robber" (3). Mighty

eaters and drinkers when they had the chance, defying hardships and danger, they were as pitiless to themselves as they were merciless to others. Their historian, Snorro Stiorleson, writing soon after 1200, describes the customary way to get rid of a foreign enemy or home rival—to surround his house by treachery, and burn every one in it—which "was a feat much admired." If in danger of defeat at home they would inflict the same horror on their kindred as on enemies. Where each little district had its king, and each king was privileged to choose any number of wives, families of rulers multiplied. Crowded into their narrow realms, chiefs who found their territory cut down too small for their ancient honour "drove about in piratical expeditions" to seek some new dominion; a high-spirited "king" even at twelve years old might start as leader of roving adventurers. "There were," said the Norse historian, "many sea-kings who ruled over many people, but had no lands, and he might well be called a sea-king who never slept beneath sooty roof-timbers" (4). "Great scourers of the seas, a nation desperate in attempting the conquest of other realms," their dominion on the whole circuit of the European waters was unchallenged. Their proud individual freedom, their desperate battle with the hard world they knew and their brave mastery of it, were expressed in a defiant paganism which would have no traffic with Christianity—a religion opposed to every instinct of their fierce independence. The ruthless cruelty with which after long centuries it was finally forced on them in the eleventh century by their Saint Olaf, is probably as ferocious a conversion as any known to European history.

The most exact account of the Norse wars in Ireland is in the contemporary meagre record of the Ulster Annals. Caution is needed in the reading of later sagas and histories, which, however, add all that lacks in the Annals of warmth and vivid emotion. The story of Ireland lies not in the detailed study of attacks and wars,

but rather in the way that the Irish under their old constitution met the violence of the impact, what force of recovery was in them, and what were the permanent results.

In 795 the burning of Rechra, now Lambay island, by "Genti" driven off from the opposite coast was the first warning of danger. Coasting round the north shores they entered the wide expanse of the Atlantic, and landed in 807 at Inishmurray off the coast of Sligo. Shifting and multiplying fleets of marauders presently swarmed round the coasts—emigrants who had flung themselves on the ocean to escape the rough hand of conquering kings, buccaneers seeking "the spoils of the sea" from Pictland to Gaul, stray companies out of work or putting in for a winter's shelter in Ireland, boats of whale-fishers and walrus-killers. Voyagers guided their way by the flights of birds from her shores; the harbours of "the great island" gave them winter shelter from the Atlantic tempests; her fields of corn, her cattle driven to the shore for the "strand-hewing," provisioned their crews; her woods had timber for repairs; her men and women were of price valuable for the slave-trade. The light vessels were drawn up to the shore with a gangway by which the crew could pass over and sleep on land, ready for the foray. In 811 and 812 we read of battle and slaughter in east Ulster, Mayo, Connemara, and west Munster about Loch Lein: in 821 of plunder and "a great prey of women" in Étair or Howth, and the whole southern coast invaded from Wexford to Cork. From Skellig-Michael, the island cliff amid Atlantic waves, the pirates carried off in 824 the solitary hermit Etgall to die of hunger and thirst. The same year the oratory of Bangor the Great in the north was spoiled, and the relics of Comgall shaken out of their shrine. Downpatrick and Moville were plundered, but the invaders were beaten back from Mag Inis, now Lecale. There was fighting in Ossory, and off the Wexford coast. In 827 the "Genti" were in Louth and Brega, burning

Lusk. Falling on the Leinstermen they destroyed their camp with innumerable slain: they plundered Tech Munnu, now Taghmon in Wexford—Tech Moling, now S. Mullins on the Barrow—Inis Teoc, now Inistioge on the Nore—and the whole of Ossory, where however they lost in battle a hundred and seventy men. They carried their devastations to Glendalough, Wicklow, and Kildare; in the south to Lismore and Kinsale; on the Shannon to what is now Limerick, and over the rich lands under the fort of Shanid; raiding as far as Cork, they occupied west Munster "with a slaughter that has not been reckoned." "One of the hardest men to talk to," said a triad of the ninth century, "is a viking in his hauberk." Good roads led from every port to the farms and granaries of monastic settlements, and the tilled lands and houses of the rich agriculturists, with everywhere rich preys. In these years the Foreigners plundered Armagh for the first time in 832, and in 833 fell on the monastery of Clondalkin near Dubhlinn, the "black pool."

In some fifty years (790–840) the rovers had learned the geography of Ireland. They began to occupy islands and forelands whence to carry their raids inland. From inlets of the sea and rivers they now dragged their light boats across shallow rapids and threw them into lakes, where they found shelter and provisions while they sent inland new marauding parties. The Norse leader Turgeis, who seized Armagh after three attacks in a month (832), brought with him "a great royal fleet into the north of Ireland," and holding Loch Neagh and the main waterways opened systematic destruction as far as Derry. Forannan the chief *comarb* or lay successor of S. Patrick fled with the shrine of the saint to Munster "whilst Turgeis was in Armagh and in the sovereignty of the north of Ireland"; taken captive by the Foreigners of Limerick who broke the shrine and carried him to their ships, he yet lived to return to Armagh on the fall of Turgeis. In Monaghan the raiders seized the shrine of

Adamnan, and burned Clones, leading captive bishops and presbyters and wise men, and putting others to death. The fleet in Loch Ree, where Turgeis seems to have taken command about 837, plundered Clonmacnois, Clonfert, Lorrha, Tír dá glas, Iniscaltra, and the churches of Loch Derg. His wife Ota is said to have given her oracles from the chief altar of Clonmacnois. On the eastern side the inlets of Loch Cúan and Carlingford opened the way to some of the most fruitful lands in Ireland. From Snaim Aignech at the head of Carlingford Loch the foreigners took captive great numbers of the *familia* of Patrick. The tillage farmers round Loch Cúan, and pious settlements such as the island Mahee, must have been left desolate, and all the rich surrounding country-side, with Moville and what was left of Bangor the Great.

Scandinavian raids were now in fact taking on the character of organized commercial enterprise, following on one of the great revolutions in world-history—the ruin of the Imperial trade of Europe by the conquests of Islam (5). Since 476 the power of the Roman Emperors had passed to the eastern Emperors at Constantinople. But the Roman Empire had left to the western world a definite system of common life—various peoples gathered under a supreme Emperor—"cities" where kings and bishops and courts resided, and great ceremonies and political functions were concentrated. A large and wealthy body of professional merchants, gathered in the cities and occupied in commerce on the grand scale, did business far and wide. The imperial system was based on the freedom of the sea. Mediterranean commerce bound together in a common interest Syria, Africa, Italy, Spain, and Gaul, with the outlying lands beyond. Marseilles with its colonies of foreign merchants, Jews and Syrians, was for the west the capital of all trades of luxury—oil, spices, fabrics, Egyptian papyrus, the wines

of Gaza. Its immense business brought to it the leading representatives of international traffic in western Europe, based on the credit and currency of the Imperial coinage.

The whole of this complicated order of trade was shattered by the triumphant wars of Islam. Half a century after Muhammad's first attack on the Eastern Empire in Palestine (629) his followers had conquered Syria, seized Alexandria, the second city in the Mediterranean world, spread over the north of Africa, destroyed Carthage, and reached the Atlantic (675). In the next half century Asia Minor was overrun, Constantinople besieged for a year, Cyprus the important centre of Mediterranean trade occupied, and south France invaded. In 785 the conquerors celebrated their triumph in Spain by the great mosque at Cordova. Islam stood as the great rival of Christendom and its civilization.

By the closing of the Mediterranean highway of exchange, the emperor at Constantinople was practically cut off from western Europe. The elaborate system of organized trade on an international scale perished from the roots. The leading port of Marseilles lay empty and desolate, the streets of the city bare, and the dependent merchants of Gaul in irretrievable calamity. Civilization and commerce, broken off from the old Roman Empire, were adrift in a world where intercourse of the various regions had ceased.

It was in this crisis of economic disaster that a new Empire arose resting on other trades, other seas, other peoples, and other money. Charles the Great, sole ruler of the Frankish kingdom, had since 771 fought the heathen Saxons between the Elbe and the Rhine, the Lombards of Italy in defence of the Pope, and the Spanish Islam; in 796 he made his famous court-town at Aachen (Aix la Chapelle), "the Rome of the North," centre of the new civilization. In 797 the Church of Rome repudiated allegiance to the infamous Empress-Mother Eirene who ruled at Byzantium, and in 800 the

victorious warrior of the Faith, Charles the Great, was crowned at Rome Emperor of the West. He had the genius and originality to see that Europe had ceased to live by the Mediterranean, and that the old merchants of the great commerce had become negligible. He was strong enough to accept the new conditions for northern Europe, where a rising industry was already moving along the borders of the English Channel and the North Sea, by Rouen, Quentoric, Duurstede, with a traffic between the Carolingian dominions and the shores of England, northern Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. Its main wealth lay in the cloths of Flanders carried by Frisian mariners across the narrow seas from the Scheldt, the Meuse, and the Rhine. Traffic was local, worked by small traders. Furs and slaves from the north were brought by sharp adventurers to the petty dealers of the coasts. Agriculturists carried their supplies to neighbouring village markets. When in this small commerce gold disappeared from circulation the new Emperor, with a genius ready for every emergency, struck his money in silver, with lesser common coins suited to the popular needs. But amid the general disorganization his plan of reserving to the monarch at least the profit of mintage failed; and from the middle of the tenth century the right of coinage became by concessions a local affair. For example, Sitric, lord of Dublin and the Liffey harbour, could presently strike coins that carried value in Scandinavia (6).

For many decades the Scandinavian mariners had been searching out all the openings to piracy and traffic in the northern seas, and they were ready for the new occasion. Traders as well as pirates, they bartered their furs, skins, and slaves for the cloths and skilled manufactures of the mainland. When the traffic of Eastern luxuries was checked in the Mediterranean, Swedish and Danish adventurers opened a new trade from Byzantium through Russia and dispersed their rich Eastern wares along the northern coasts. The North no longer looked to

Marseilles and Gaul as the source of their supplies, but to Gothland and the Baltic.

The Imperial Mediterranean commerce fell before the hosts of the infidel. The first beginnings of a new Imperial trade at Aachen were broken by the Scandinavian masters of the northern seas. If Marseilles had been left desolate, Duurstede on the North Sea lay a heap of ruins after successive destructions by Danish pirates in 800, 813 and 820 A.D. (7). The terror of the Scandinavian raiders was on every shore—rovers sheltering in creeks and islands for the winter to plunder the mainland in summer, and in the open ocean sailing to ever wider voyages of adventure. From Aachen between the Meuse and the Rhine Charles kept watch on the northern coast. In a riddling puzzle (probably between 782 and 786) he asked a learned man of his court, Paul the Deacon, whether he would prefer to be crushed under a huge mass of iron, or doomed for ever to a gloomy dungeon cave, or sent to convert and baptize Sigfrid the king who "wields the impious sceptre of pestilential Denmark." The Emperor's desperate effort in 810 to form a fleet for the protection of the Frisian coast was vain.

With the larger ventures of the Scandinavians the war in Ireland took on a new character. The Norse were already before 840 permanently settled in the Orkneys, Shetlands, Hebrides, Caithness, Argyle, and the Isle of Man; whence they could send to Ireland more numerous fleets, and warriors better organized for plunder (8). Powerful fleets took possession of the rivers that traversed the rich plains of Brega and Meath, sixty ships on the Boyne in 837, and as many on the Liffey. The first prey was taken from south Brega in 836 after fierce resistance, with many killed and captives. In 841 the Gaill raised the earliest fortified stations on harbours; known in the Annals by the term *long-phort* (9)—a word at first applied to ships drawn up and protected on the

land-side, but which in the course of the next seventy years came to mean an entrenched or stockaded position for an army. There was one at Linn-Duachaid or Casán Linn, the "paths of the pool," later known as Ath-na-gCasan or Anagassan, the "ford of the paths" —a port of note in ancient times, where the old northern highway from Tara, the *Sligha Midluachra*, touched the harbour at the opening of the rivers Clyde and Dee as they fell together into the sea. Another was at *Dubhlinn*, where the Liffey dark from the bog underlying its waters met the tide of the Irish Sea. From fixed harbour-forts roving expeditions were not limited to a day's march from the coast: raiders of Anagassan crossed the country to Tethba and to Clonmacnois; those of Dublin reached out to the Slieve Bloom mountains and to Birr and Saighir in Ely O'Carroll. Under these cross-country raids of plunderers the old houses of hospitality along the great lines of traffic vanished from the social system of Ireland. The invaders proceeded with method, choosing their rallying points, their winter quarters, the times of their striking so as not to return too quickly to places already visited; ordering their devastations with all the foresight of skilled commercial agents, and providing for convenient depots where plunder could be stored and exchanged. Warriors who sailed to gather booty one month, in the next crossed the sea as merchants in the world-trade—ready-armed to overwhelm rival traders on the way, whose stores might enrich their own cargo.

From this time "most cruel devastation" swept over the whole midland country—the fleets of the eastern plains and of the Shannon alike gathering the wealth of that fertile territory, Meath, easy of access and sure of profit. According to a "triad" of the ninth century, Bangor the Great and Lynally were counted as two of three famous unlucky places in Ireland, no doubt because of their repeated plunderings and destruction. The bones of the powerful S. Colmán were hastily buried in

their shrine for centuries to come (10). Famous smiths' work of Lynally, bridles of silver and gold, sacred vessels, disappeared. The whole middle district from Clonmacnois to Kells must have been especially rich in embroideries, ornaments, rich vessels, decorated cloaks and tunics and woollen mantles, which went the same road to foreign markets. To Scandinavians, who for centuries to come had no written literature, the scribes had left evil spells of witchcraft; illuminated manuscripts and relics were flung into rivers and bog-holes, and whole libraries utterly destroyed. A manuscript of Irish writing in the ninth century which is still preserved at Laon was probably written at Armagh, by the bishop, anchorite, and eminent scribe Mochta († 893), and carried for safety to the Continent from one of the half-dozen raids by which Armagh was devastated in the forty-five years after 898 A.D. (11).

The new character of the war was demonstrated when in 849 the "king of the Foreigners" sent a fleet of seven score ships to establish his power over all the Norse settlers in Ireland; and Dubhlinn, with its bridge of hurdles, was marked out by the strategic genius of the Scandinavians as the critical centre of the Irish settlement. In 851 a fleet of Black Gaill or Danes from south Sweden and Jutland fell on the White Gaill of the Liffey harbour, broke their fleet at sea, and in battle on shore slew vast numbers, beheading every one of the slain, and carried off a great prey of women with the gold and property stored in the fort. "And thus," says an Irish tale, "the Lord took from them all the wealth which they had taken from the churches and sanctuaries and shrines of the saints of Erinn" (12). The Fingaill in their turn surprised the Dubhgaill at Snaim Aignech at the head of Carlingford Loch, and drove them from their ships. On which the Danish commander advised his men to put themselves under the protection of S. Patrick by promising "honourable alms for the gaining of victory and triumph" over those who had robbed

his churches and outraged the saints of Ireland. By "the tutelage of S. Patrick" victory turned to the Danes with treasures of gold and silver and women and ships captured in the Norse camp. In 853 the Norse again triumphed under Amlaib or Olaf, "son of the king of Lochlann," who arrived with a prodigious fleet, when the Foreigners of Ireland submitted to him as king of Dublin, and a tribute was given him by the Gaidhel. The defences of the post were strengthened by his new fort Dún Amlaib at Clondalkin. He became joint king with Imhar or Hingmar.

The Liffey swamp itself was not a site which tempted the old Irish to form a settlement, but to the Scandinavians it had a special value not only for trade by sea and land, but as a border post whence troops could be thrown into the lands of the Uí Neill, or of the Leinster kings, or across the middle country to the Shannon. The river line here bounded kingdoms whose hostility was bitter ever since the Uí Neill had wrested from the men of Leinster "the plain of Meath," imposing on them a hated tribute. From the little hill where the Castle now stands, once overgrown with hazels and willows, the Foreigners commanded that most critical position in Irish history, where the river was crossed by the bridge of hurdles at Ath Cliath, leading to the main road from Leinster to Tara and the north—a passage well known in Irish history. The story was not forgotten of the "massacre of Ath Cliath" in 769 when the men of Brega, on their way home from a fight with the men of Wicklow, met the full sea-tide as they tried to cross the frontier at the bridge of hurdles, and fell in "the great slaughter." The district was populous and wealthy. The Uí Briuin Chualainn had settled in the region round Slíab Cualann (now vulgarly called the Sugar Loaf). No monastery was more famous than that of Tallaght in the wide plain into which half a dozen passes dropped from the Wicklow hills—rival of Armagh as a centre of learning, national and ecclesiastical—a curious fore-

shadowing of later conflict between the Primate of Armagh and the Archbishop of Dublin. The abbot of Clondalkin held an important place in the events of the time. Close by on the Escir ridge the ruins of a church still remain on the site of an ancient rath, overlooking reaches of fertile land. The abbey of Finglas was not far from the hurdle bridge. Kilmainham recalls the "church of Maignend" on a height overlooking the Liffey, founded about 600 and still standing in the time of Brían Boru. The church of Cell-mo-Shámhóg near Islandbridge became famous as the site of the "battle of Dublin" (919) between the high-king and the Norsemen It was a land good to plunder, the pleasant plain of the Dodder and the Liffey between the mountains and the sea, with its circle of prosperous monasteries.

To the Scandinavians, lords not of the land but of the ocean, the value of Dublin was not as a capital of Irish sovereignty but as commanding the Irish Sea. In York kings of Dublin or of the same family had their other capital, carrying on business through the North Sea and the Baltic. Dublin harbour was to the foreign adventurers a trading and military centre, a port in which the warrior might any day change from raider to armed chapman, sailing under the rules of either profession in turn. The defending fort Dún Amlaib at Clondalkin showed the importance Olaf attached to the new site, and the attack and burning of the Dún in 867 was the answer of the Irish Cennétig king of Leix. Beneath the fort the "hurdle bridge" made a passage half lost in marsh between the tidal waters to seaward and on the other side the "Black Pool." From a later poem we learn that the Ford of Fences was a passage within a row of piles, a palisade compared to some monster's ribs (13). On the level ground by the river off "Dam" Street, near the site of the House of Parliament in the eighteenth century, was the common Assembly of the Scandinavians—a circular Moat bearing on its summit the King's seat, and below it in ordered concentric tiers or

steps the seats of his kingly sons, his earls, and men of substance according to their degrees. The "folksmot" was always in the open air, while the "husting," where the king called his guardsmen or the leaders of his army, was gathered in a house. The "twelve judges" who presided in their tribunals, and the "twelve best men" who took part in the election of a new king formed a number strange to the Irish, who even to the seventeenth century called the Norwegians "the Twelve Judges Clan" (14).

Dublin itself remained a pagan city with its temple to Thor (probably where S. Andrew's church now stands) close to the Thing, and to the mounds where the kings were buried, above the rush of the tide checked at Dam Street. In the boggy marsh by the Liffey timber houses seem then and later to have been raised on wooden piles or hurdles. The only Irish inhabitants were apparently the captives used as slaves, or sold (in 980 two thousand of them) to traders. The first "city" founded in Ireland, it carried from first to last its non-national character—alien in religion, tradition, and culture—based on the right of a strong hand and a stiff trade. Foreign raids and pillage, however rude their destruction, were evils that passed away—but a permanent foreign city commanding the approach to the rich central lands of Ireland, itself fed and defended from the sea, held at all times by strangers, and by its position unconquerable from the land, remained to Irishmen for centuries to come a perpetual menace to national life. In 1650 Duald MacFirbis tells that the greater part of the merchants of Dublin are descended from Amlaib Cuaran, the viking who fought the battle of Brunanburh and was king of York and later of Dublin; and he adds the moral—"Thus the race of this Amlaib Cuaran in the town of Ath Cliath is opposing the Gaidhels of Erin" (15).

The encampment at Ath Cliath intensified, and at the same time made more perilous, the conflict between

north and south. Kings of Cashel had mostly remained in a sort of passive resistance to the north, secure behind the fighting-men of Leinster. It was not till the Norse raiders were ravaging the whole territories of the Uí Neill that the ambition of the southern kings, themselves still beyond reach of attack, became again active.

Ireland has been charged with slackness or timidity in not sending fleets from her shores either to destroy the pirates or to share their profitable trade. The reasons are not far to seek. The Irish were daring sailors since the days when Columcille waited for news of his friend Cormac, who in a boat of skin voyaged to the Orkneys, "beyond the limits of human endeavour." They were in the Faroe islands about 725 A.D.; it is said in Norway that the sheep left there by Irish adventurers attracted the first Norwegian settlers. They reached Iceland in 795, and left behind them "Irish books, bells, and croziers." The first Norse settlers there in 814 carried with them ten Irish captives by whose long sea experience their own lives were saved, the Irish teaching their captors, when fresh water in the ship was exhausted, to avert death by a mixture of meal and butter kneaded into "mynnthak." Old laws of the seventh or eighth centuries describe three ships used by the Irish—*na longa fada*, called after the Latin *naves longae;* "barks" "which are not rowed"; and "hide-covered boats." But for war at sea Ireland was not better prepared than England, or than the Emperor Charles the Great. With a population not increasing, but growing in wealth and industry, there was no reason for hopeless crusades against the sea forces of Scandinavia. Nor could the Irish in the fervour of their Christian faith have made common cause with heathen slave-dealers as rigid in their paganism as merciless in their traffic. No organized defence was possible against raids striking unforeseen from the unknown, and vanishing as suddenly as they came. During centuries of general internal peace permanent military organization was not required, and fighting men

called out from their ordinary peaceful occupations could not lawfully be held to military service for more than a few weeks in any year. As for monastic settlements where tenant farmers were freed from "hosting," they were practically defenceless. Mercenary forces, long abandoned among the Irish, may now have appeared occasionally here and there, when from 856 chance bands of the "Gall-gaedhel" made their appearance, people of the generation following the Norse conquest of the Isle of Man and the Hebrides, men of mixed race, speaking broken Irish and probably broken Norse, half or wholly pagan, ready to fight as occasion served on any and every side, but it would seem in most cases for the Irish (16). As battle swung backwards and forwards, we catch in a few stray fragments of verse preserved by chance glimpses both of the terror of that time and of the Irish temper (17). One fragment rejoices in the harsh protection allowed by winter tempests: "Bitter is the wind to-night. It tosses the ocean's white hair; I do not fear the fierce warriors of Norway coursing on the Irish sea to-night." Another gives the spirit of the defenders: "Conaire of the race of Cean loved nothing better than to hide in his garment Viking loot, as if in the overflow of the full harvest in a high wood a handful of grey apples had been shaken down by the King of kings." Such another warrior must have been Maelciarain, "hero-plunderer of the Foreigners, champion of the east of Ireland," slain in 869. Like the men of the Netherlands the Irish must have realized that there was no security other than the fortress against the Northmen, unskilled in the arts of siege: hence the jibe against the man of Down who failed to stand like a strongly-barred castle against the storming of the pirate host: "Son of Flannain, thou lazy mare, thou one-legged goose, thou crooked lock when the battle-cry of the Vikings rings out."

Sites and dates and leaders of battles often remain unknown in a conflict where neither victory nor defeat

counted beyond the day of fighting. But forty years of raiding expeditions did not pass without Irish resistance, growing more resolute as the violence of attack increased. The first "slaughters of the Genti" were in Mayo, and in Munster at Loch Lein (811); in Mag Inis (825); in Brega (827); a victory by the high-king Niall in the first year of his reign (833); by the Uí Fidgente in west Munster (834); by the men of Brega (837). The year after the destruction of Connacht and Meath and the monasteries of the Shannon, Mael Seachlinn king of Meath took Turgeis prisoner, and executed him after Irish law by drowning in Loch Owel (845); and the high-king Niall in that year, the last of his life, fought a victorious battle. In 846 the first act of the new high-king Mael Seachlinn was to demolish the stronghold of Irish robber-bands plundering the country "after the manner of the Genti." In 848 he slew seven hundred of the Foreigners in a fight at Forach near Skreen. Tigernach king of Lagore gained a yet greater victory. Already in 847 Cearbhall king of Ossory had attacked and defeated the foreign settlers in Dublin. The next year Olcobhar king of Munster with Lorcan king of Leinster slew twelve hundred of the enemy in battle, among them the heir of the king of Lochlann; and there was another victory over the "Genti" by the Eóganacht of Cashel. Perhaps the return of Díarmait to Armagh from his exile by Turgeis showed some relaxation of the terror in the north. A contemporary chronicler, Prudentius of Troyes, has an entry under the year 848: "The Irish are victorious over the invading Northmen with the help of Christ and drive them from their borders. For which cause the king of the Irish sends an embassy to Charles (the Bald) in token of peace and friendship, bringing gifts and requesting a passage for the king to Rome" (18).

The reign of Feidlimid (820–847), second of the recorded ecclesiastical kings of Munster—"optimus Scottorum" according to the northern chronicler, "a

scribe and anchorite," but in an earlier account described as carrying a crozier—covered the first period of the Norse invasion. One of his first acts was to meet Artri bishop of Armagh (823) and establish with him the "Law of Patrick" in Munster, thus enforcing again the claim of Armagh to the primacy. A relentless man of war, his career, to quote Dr. MacNeill, "reads like that of a heathen king of Norsemen." In 823 he burned the monastery of Gallen, a foundation of the Britons in the west of Meath, with its dwelling places and oratory. In 826 he led the army of Munster over the Connacht border, burning the same district: and again in 830 he wasted Fore and south Connacht. The next year (831), at the head of troops of Munster and Leinster, he plundered Brega; and in 833 attacked Clonmacnois and Durrow in turn, slaughtering in each the *familia*, and burning the termon-lands to the church door. In 836 he attacked the ecclesiastical settlement of Kildare, carrying off captive from the monastery Forinnan abbot of Armagh, and dignitaries of "Patrick's congregation" there assembled—fugitives apparently from Armagh under Turgeis. When the expelled abbot Díarmait fled, carrying the "law and ensigns" of Patrick, he had been replaced in 835 by Forinnan, a man of Monaghan, who in his turn also fled, taking refuge in Kildare, so that Feidlimid as new champion of Armagh possibly looked on him as a usurper; three years later (839) Díarmait was restored to Armagh.

The sinister part of the story is that Feidlimid's campaigns in Hy Many, Roscommon, Meath, Brega, and the borderlands, were made while the "Genti" were overrunning all the middle districts of the Uí Neill with their utmost ferocity. In the midst of his wars Feidlimid had held two royal assemblies with the northern kings—one convention with the high-king Conchobor at Birr in 831; and another with Niall at Cloncurry in 838. But his fixed purpose remains clear, through the calamities of north and middle Ireland to secure for himself the

high-kingship. His attack on the men of Hy Many ended in disaster according to their own account: "In Magh-I they were not feeble; let any one enquire of Feidlimid whence Lough-na-Calla was called"—the "lake of shouting"—as the Connacht men named it after their victory. Later he had his revenge, when in 840 he carried away their hostages and struck east to ravage Brega (19).

> "Feidlimid is the King
> To whom it was but one day's work
> (To obtain) the pledges of Connacht without battle,
> And to devastate Meath."

He felt no obligation to aid the Uí Neill against heathen raiders. Their danger was his opportunity to raise the power of Cashel to its highest point. Amid ruins of Norse raids he marched to Tara itself, and "rested there" after the example of Cathal a hundred years before—an occupation of the royal hill which he could use to assert his claim to be "king of Ireland." In 841, while the "Genti" were raising their first fortress at Dubh-linn he led his host to Carman near Mullaghmast, the assembly-place of the Leinster kings, no doubt to preside there and assert his sovereignty over Leinster as well as over Connacht and Meath. There the final conflict was waged. The high-king Niall marched to meet him. The flight of Feidlimid was recorded by the triumphant pæan of some Uí Neill court-poet, very scornful of a southern ecclesiastic as against a northern battle-hero (20):

> "The crozier of vigil-keeping Feidlimid,
> Which was left on the thorn-trees,
> Niall bore off, with usual power,
> By right of the battle of swords."

Six years later the contest ended, when Niall Caille "died by drowning" in 846, and in 847 Feidlimid "rested." Possibly it was some Munster patriot who

during this time composed under the name of S. Patrick the famous "Blessing on Munster" (21).

The new high-king Mael Seachlinn was a man of great power. He had already (846) taken prisoner Turgeis and executed him by drowning, and carried war against lawless men and foreign pirates. By solemn counsel of the good men of Ireland and the abbot of Armagh in a state assembly he put to death the son of the king of Connacht for joining in the pirates' raids (851). That same year he held a royal meeting in Armagh with the nobles of all Leth Cuinn and the king of east Ulster, and the congregation of Patrick and clerics of Meath. In 855 he crossed the border of the men of Munster, and took hostages of their submission; and three years later again marched through the south to the sea, stopping ten nights at the Blackwater, and carrying away hostages as far as the Old Head of Kinsale and the Aran islands. Yet another royal assembly of kings and abbots was held by Mael Seachlinn at Rahugh in 859, with the abbots of Armagh and of Clonard, which established peace and concord between the men of Ireland; and in that assembly the king of Ossory and the king of Munster entered into allegiance with Leth Cuinn. The next year (860) Mael Seachlinn led the hostings of the three provinces, Munster, Leinster, and Connacht, to Armagh in token of the sovereignty of all Ireland. He was challenged in a furious night attack and slaughter by the king of Ailech, Áed Finnliath or "fair-gray," son of a former high-king and heir to Tara, but held his post. It was his last triumph. In 862 he died, and Áed reigned at Tara.

Áed had been entangled with one of the wild and restless princes of Brega in raids on Meath. But as high-king he took up the war against the invaders. From their new fort at Dubh-linn Olaf and his associate Ivar raided with increased violence the middle territory where the great tumuli of the Boyne were broken open in 863—"the cave of Achadh-Aldai, and the cave of

Cnoghba, and the cave of Fert-Boadan over Dubadh, and the cave of the smith's wife, were searched by the Foreigners, which had not been done before . . . and Lorcan son of Cathal, king of Meath, was with them thereat," for which crime he was taken and blinded in the next year. In a later expedition from Leinster to Kerry, about 865, the son of Olaf and another chieftain "left not a cave underground that they did not explore; and they left nothing from Limerick to Cork that they did not ravage." Gold by this time must have been getting scarce in the monasteries. In 866 Áed plundered the Norse strongholds on the coast, carried off spoils, brought away twelve score heads from his victory at Loch Foyle; and three years later defeated armies of Brega and Leinster who had joined a great host of Foreigners. From that time none of the Gaill made military settlements north of Dublin and Limerick, and the fact that in 879 Áed "fell asleep" in the monastery of Dromiskin in Co. Louth testifies to his success in checking the menace of the "Genti" in northern Ireland. To some extent they repaired in the south their losses in the north. Above all they had secured the harbour of the Liffey.

In no case, however, did wars or alliances secure for the "Genti" a permanent hold on the inland country; while the frequent conferences of kings of Cashel and kings of Tara never ceased to show an underlying common policy for the interests of Ireland as a whole. In thirty years we have seen recorded four important assemblies: A royal meeting at Birr between the king of Cashel and the high-king in 836, and "a great royal meeting" in 837 at Cloncurry on the Leinster border between the kings of Cashel and Tara. The third royal meeting, in Armagh, was between the high-king and the northern nobles, with the congregation of Patrick and the clerics of Meath (851). But the fourth assembly at Rahugh in Meath (859) again concerned the south; when the king of Tara, and abbots of the north made peace and

concord between the men of Ireland, and Cearbhall king of Ossory gave the award of the congregation. There Ossory entered into allegiance with the north, and the king of Munster tendered his allegiance.

Olaf himself meanwhile was warring in Pictland (865), whence he returned to plunder and burn Armagh (868), and again sailed to join Ivar in Scotland, where the northern Britons still held the fortress of Alcluit (Dumbarton) long after they had been dispossessed of their other territories in Scotland. After the capture of Alcluit (870) Olaf returned with a fleet of two hundred ships, and a great spoil of men, Angles and Britons and Picts, in captivity; and pursued his ravages in Munster and Connacht till in 871 he was slain in battle. Ivar followed him as "King of Dublin" and of "the Norsemen of all Ireland and Britain" till he "ended life" in 873.

The capture of Alcluit after four months of siege by Ivar and Olaf (870) ends the history of the Britons who outside the bounds of the Roman Empire had remained unsubdued till the Norse attack. The hosts of the Norsemen and Danes were now established over all the coast districts which before had been held by the Scots, as well as Caithness and Sutherland in the extreme north, and Galloway (Gallovidia, GallGaedhil, in Norse Gallgeddlar): and the Hebrides, henceforth the islands of the foreigners, Inse Gall.

On every side the Scandinavians were triumphant. They had overrun England so that the greatest king and statesman of the English, Ælfred (871–901), was only able by treaty to secure one-third of his country, which he held during his life; the terror of the time has its echoes in prophecies preserved for centuries, such as: "When the Black Fleet of Norway was come and gone, after in England there should be war never." Invasions in mass, with a systematic ordering of war

and pillage, fell on the lands where Charles the Great had set up his new civilization on the old Imperial inheritance of laws and beliefs. Lords of conquered territories on the Meuse and the Rhine, they entered Paris by the Seine, overran Normandy in 876, and presently voyaged down the coasts of Spain, by the Mediterranean to Sicily and Italy, and so opened their long-sea route to Constantinople. Meanwhile colonies of Swedes had passed by the Baltic and the gulf of Finland to settle on the opposite coast about Novgorod and along the Dnieper—the Eastway, as they called it—leaving their traces in Scandinavian names along the rapids of the river, till in 839 they came in contact with the Greeks, and Swedish traders were introduced by the Emperor of the East to the Western Emperor, Louis the Pious. In 865 two hundred of their vessels appeared before Constantinople; in 880 they had reached the Sea of Azof, the Don and the Volga; in 913 they had five hundred ships, each carrying a hundred men, in the Caspian. In Gothland, a general centre of exchange for the Eastway trade in luxuries, Russian furs, Greek and Arabian silks, and Indian spices, there have been found about thirty thousand coins, most of them from central Asia, of the tenth century. Already in the middle of the ninth century the Scandinavians threatened to become masters of Europe from the Volga to the Shannon. They had on the ocean no opposition to fear: their monopoly of sea-power was assured for centuries to come.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XVII.

(1) P. 312. "The Church Historians of England," Vol. I, Part II ("Beda"), p. 472.
(2) P. 312. "The Saga of Burnt Njal" (ed. Dasent), II, 7.
(3) P. 312. Alex Bugge: "Entstehung der Isländischen Saga" (*Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum*, Band LI).
(4) P. 313. Laing: "Sea-kings of Norway," pp. 246, 260.
(5) P. 316. H. Pirenne: "Un Contraste Économique," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, n. 2, avril 1923. See also Bugge,

"Seafaring and Shipping during the Viking Ages." (Saga Book of the Viking Club, Jan. 1909.)

(6) P. 318. The Stavanger Museum in Norway has coins of this period minted in twenty-nine different places. Some hundred coins were discovered in the Bukn islands in 1923, supposed to have been buried there in 1020. Among them are very many from London, York, and other cities. The German coins are of very inferior quality, those identified being of the time of Otto I, II, and III, and a few of Henry II.

(7) P. 319. An admirable description of the pirate raids on the northern coasts of Europe is given by the eminent historian Henri Pirenne in his "Histoire de Belgique" (Vol. I).

(8) P. 319. "The Isle of Man, from its secure position and proximity to fairly prosperous regions, must have been a great support of the Norse power in these parts. Orosius says that in his time Man was held by the Irish (about 350–400)—these could have been either ancient settlers or more probably (since Orosius calls them Scotti) part of the Irish overflow of that age. Several oghams attest continued Irish occupation, probably in the sixth century. One of them contains the name of Conaille, gens then ruling in the district of Dundalk. Later, the Britons occupied Man. The 'Annales Cambrae' probably give some particulars. These Britons are likely to have been of the element squeezed out of southern Scotland between the Scots and the Bernician Angles, as I think were also the Britons who, under Cunedda and his sons, displaced the Irish power in Wales. The Norsemen displaced the Britons in Man but Irish seems to have remained the language of the island throughout. Manx is a dialect of Irish having features common to most of the dialects that came under Norse influence. In Manx, a husbandman is called *éireannach* (I give the Irish spelling, as I am not sure of the Manx spelling), which means 'Irishman,' a proof that the native population, as distinguished from the seafaring, were known to tradition to be Irish. Under the later Norwegian power, the kings of Man were subject to Norway but superior to the kings of the Hebrides. Hence the bishopric of Sodor and Man—Sodor = Sudreyar = the Hebrides.

"I can find no history of the Norsemen in Galloway until the twelfth century, but in Gaelic, Galloway is Gallaibh = the Norsemen. Cunningham in Ayrshire seems also to be the name of a Norse settlement." (Eoin MacNeill.)

(9) P. 319. Eoin MacNeill in *Scottish Review*, XXXIX, pp. 254–276.

(10) P. 321. Kuno Meyer: "Life of Colman" (*R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, XVII). For the wanderings of Columcille's relics see Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 351.

(11) P. 321. Kuno Meyer: "Uber eine Handschrift von Laon"

(*Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1914, Klasse von 30 April).

(12) P. 321. "War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill," p. lxiv.

(13) P. 323. *R.I.A.* Todd Lecture Series, X, pp. 315, 101.

(14) P. 324. For Dublin see Haliday's Scandinavian History of Dublin; and his first address, reprinted in *Sinn Fein*, May 27, 1911.

(15) P. 324. Duald MacFirbis: "On the Fomorians and Norsemen." (Trans. Alexander Bugge, Christiania 1905.)

(16) P. 326. Walsh: "Scandinavian Relations with Ireland," p. 10. The "gicgog of a Gall-Gaedheal" was generally understood to mean halting or broken Gaelic. The fleet of the Gall-Gaedhel is mentioned. There was a mixed Norse and Gaelic population in Galloway (the word is a corruption of Gall-Gaedhel) as well as in the Hebrides.

(17) P. 326. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," 56, 61; "Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 101; "Ulster Annals," I, p. 381.

(18) P. 327. The following passage is from Traube's essay on Sedulius Scottus in his "O Roma Nobilis" in the *Proceedings of the Bavarian Academy*, xix, 1892, p. 342: "Die Vermutung ist gestattet, dass Sedulius mit der irischen Gesandschaft aufs Festland gekommen ist, von der Prudentius zum Jahr 848 berichtet: 'Scotti super Nordmannos iruentes auxilio domini nostri Jesu Christi victores eos a suis finibus propellunt. Unde et rex Scottorum ad Karolum pacis et amicitiae gratia legatos cum muneribus mittit viam sibi petenti Romam concedi deposcens.'"

(19) P. 329. "Ulster Annals."

(20) P. 329. *Ib.*

(21) P. 330. Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 29.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOREIGN SETTLEMENTS IN IRELAND

From about 876 Irish annals tell of comparative freedom from foreign attacks for some forty years. The range of wars and enterprises undertaken by Norse and Danes had become in fact too great even for their stupendous energy, and may have in some degree relaxed the strain on Ireland. A sign of the change may be seen in the carrying of the relics of Columcille in 874 to Ireland as to a place of comparative safety. Even the rule of Dublin was contested. Ivar's friend and ally Cearbhall king of Ossory was said to have been king of the Foreign settlement of Dublin from 873, and to have held it till his death in 888. Flann Sinna (king of Ireland since 879) apparently claimed sovereignty in the city, but was defeated by the Foreigners in 888. After 889 Dublin seems to have been under the rule of another Cearbhall, king of Leinster, called "king of Liffe of ships." In 902 he united the men of Brega and Leinster in an attack on the fort and expelled the Foreigners, who escaped half-dead, wounded and broken, leaving half their ships behind. After Cearbhall, for forty years "a most excellent king of the Leinstermen, died of anguish" (909), Dublin was probably dominated for a time by the high-king Niall Glundubh (916–919).

It was, however, ominous that in these years of supposed peace the national assembly of Tailtiu was interrupted and gradually abandoned. In over four hundred past years there had been five failures to hold the assembly—in 717 a king of Brega, who aspiring to the

high-kingship was deposed and exiled to Britain, returned and failed to make good his claim by disturbing the Fair. In 833 Cathal king of Munster attempted to preside at Tailtiu, and was prevented by the king of Meath. In 811 the high-king Áed Oirdnide from Ailech was forbidden to hold the Assembly by interdict from the monastery of Tallaght, whose rights of sanctuary had been violated by the southern Uí Neill: he proceeded to hold it, but failed: "neither horse nor chariot came thither;" until the sanctuary of Tallaght received many gifts in reparation. In 827 the Assembly was broken up "against the Gailings" by the high-king Conchobor: it is probable that Conchobor, harassed by pirate raids on the Bregian coasts, and by the wars of king Feidlimid of Munster aiming at the high-kingship, deferred the Assembly against the wishes of the Gailings in neighbouring territories, who grudged the loss to them, and tried to hold the festival on their own account till the king enforced obedience. In 831 there was a "disturbance" of the Assembly owing to a dispute concerning the reliquaries of S. Patrick and S. MacCuilinn of Lusk, brought no doubt for the purpose of oaths in some important litigation.

These rare events, however, were of a very different order from the calamities when Tara, within an easy ride from Ath Cliath, lay under the constant menace of the Dublin fort. Henceforth we hear only of disaster. In 873 the Fair of Tailtiu was "not celebrated, without just and sufficient cause, which we have not heard to have occurred from ancient times." Again in 876 "without just and sufficient cause" there was no Fair held; and once more in 878. Ten years later "it happened that the Fair of Tailtiu was not celebrated," and again in 889, and the fact becomes so normal throughout the following years that the annalist no longer records it. In 916 Niall Glundubh in the first year of his kingship held the Fair once more. There was "interruption" at the next attempted celebration, and no

Fair was held from that time till its brief "renewal" by Mael Sechnaill in 1007.

The history of the tenth century for some seventy years is sharply divided between the separate issues of the south and of the north—the fall of Leth Moga, and the fight of Leth Cuinn against the Foreigners.

Cormac mac Cuilenan (901–908), bishop-king of Munster, was a famous man of letters, who by force of learning and statesmanship brought the dynasty of Cashel to its highest power, ruling with an authority almost equal to the high-king. He was said to have compiled the Irish "Glossary" known by his name. Also the "Psalter of Cashel," which survives only in excerpts and quotations that mark it as probably having been a collection of historical and genealogical matter. But above all we have proof of the wide range of Cormac's enthusiasm for "Ireland universally," and his remarkable influence, in the last great gift he bequeathed his country before his tragic death—the "Book of Rights," unparalleled in that age outside the Byzantine empire. We have seen that two scribes, by tradition Selbach and Oengus, were employed by him to draw up a state document recording the kingdoms of Munster, and giving in two poems allotted to each of them their position, obligations, and relations to the king of Cashel, and what was due to them from him. The prose comments which accompany the poems show by their style, and by discrepancies of statement, that they were not part of this early edition but were added later. Cormac's Book was sent round to the principal kings of the other Provinces as a model to be followed by them. Every one of them accepted his scheme of recording their ancient tradition, and thus was completed a "Book of Rights" for all Ireland. There is no more remarkable illustration of the ceaseless work of unification which was carried on by the continuous tradition of dwellers

in the same island, and the devotion of their schools of learning.

Dr. MacNeill has gathered from many scattered allusions, and from annals apparently compiled at Durrow in Ossory with all appearance of authentic detail, the story of the disastrous battle which closed the work of Cormac (1). The unfortunate king was encouraged by Flaithbertach, abbot of Inis Cathaig on the Shannon, himself in the line of succession to the kingship of Cashel, to defy the high-king Flann Sinna by invading Leinster—the territory beyond all others jealously guarded by the Uí Neill high-kings, their choice vassals from whom they alone for five hundred years past had claimed the right of demanding homage and tribute. Cormac induced the king of Ossory to join him, crossed the Barrow in 908 and encamped for the night at Belach Mugna (Ballaghmoon in Kildare), on one of the much-disputed points of the borderland between Leinster and Meath. There the king of Leinster was posted. The reason, set up no doubt by Flaithbertach, for Cormac's expedition appears to have been a claim to jurisdiction over the monastery of Ross Glaise ("of the Munstermen"), founded by S. Eimhine or Eimíne, and called also by his name Manistir Eimhín, "Monasterevan." The founder appears to have been of the stock of the Munster kings, and the epithet *na Muimnech* "of the Munstermen" (cp. Magh Eo na Sasanach, "Mayo of the Saxons") seems to indicate that the community continued to be recruited from Munster. The combination of king and churchman in Cormac would have led to the double method of asserting jurisdiction, a method of political churchmanship resented by the chiefs and their hostings. Flann Sinna must have been warned, for when the morning came Cormac found not only the army of the Leinster king in front of him, but the high-king and the king of Connacht coming upon his left flank. "Let the clergy fight their own battles," was the cry raised by Cormac's men when they found themselves between

two hostile armies. The king of Ossory attempted to retreat but was cut off and killed. The battle became a rout. King Cormac was unhorsed and beheaded. Leinster soldiers rushed with their trophy to Flann Sinna. But according to popular legend the king of Leinster rebuked the ferocity of his men, and taking in his hands the head of the holy bishop kissed it and handed it three times round his body. A local tradition lingers that the body was borne in a waggon drawn by seven oxen, who unguided carried it to an ancient pagan burying-place, where it was laid and a little church built, Killeen Cormac. Two Munster abbots were slain in the battle. Flaithbertach, abbot of Inis Cathaig, alone among the leaders escaped, to become himself in time king of Cashel (913–944).

The Ossory collection of annals and tales gives the story of queen Gormlaith (2), daughter of the high-king Flann Sinna, who had apparently been betrothed to Cormac, and when he became an ecclesiastic was given in marriage to Cearbhall, victor over Cormac at Belach Mugna. Cearbhall, wounded in the battle, lay long ill, and once, as the queen sat on the couch at his feet he boasted rudely over the death of Cormac. Gormlaith reproached him for contempt of so good a king. In his anger Cearbhall with his foot cast the queen from the couch to the floor. Thus affronted in the presence of others, she left her husband and went back to her father, who refused to receive her, not desiring a quarrel with the formidable warrior Cearbhall. Gormlaith then sought protection from Niall Glundubh, king of Ailech. Cearbhall died of his wounds the year after the battle. In the "song of Cearbhall's sword" (3)—the famous sword given him by his father proudly known as "King of Vikings"—his court bard recounts the feats of the warrior hero: "Where Finn of the feasts is they will hail thee with 'welcome'" ends the poet. Niall married Gormlaith, and in 916 on Flann Sinna's death became king of Ireland. Thus Gormlaith, chosen to be queen

of Munster, became in turn queen of Leinster, queen of Ailech, and queen of Ireland. An old poem represents her standing by the grave of Niall and commanding a monk not to set his foot upon that clay. She died in religious retirement in 948, forty years after the battle of Belach Mugna (4).

Great veneration attended the memory of king Cormac. But with him at Belach Mugna ended the five hundred years of undisputed sovereignty of his house at Cashel, the glory of the Eóganacht dynasty, and the long peace and security of Munster. Six years later the Norse occupied Waterford without opposition. After the conquest of Normandy by Rollo (876–913) those of his followers who had no mind to abandon their seafaring adventures sailed to new raids on Scotland, north England, Wales, and Ireland. Sitric, grandson of Ivar, led an immense fleet to the Liffey in 919. Another grandson had established himself at Waterford in 914. After successive raids from 915 to 920 Danes from the Hebrides, utterly hostile to Dublin, occupied Limerick, which was strongly fortified, and soon after established dependent colonies in Cork, Youghal, Thurles, and Cashel itself, under authority of Ivar, king of Limerick and of the Foreigners of Munster (930). When the last of the ecclesiastical kings of Cashel, abbot Flaithbertach, instigator of the fight at Belach Mugna, ended his obscure reign in 944 the whole province lay helpless, open to raiders from port to port. So heavy, it was said, was the tribute demanded by the Foreigners " that there was a king over every territory, a chief over every *tuath*, an abbot over every church, a steward over every village, and a soldier in every house, so that none of the men of Erinn had power to give even the milk of his cow, nor as much as the clutch of eggs of one hen in succour or in kindness to an aged man, or to a friend, but was forced to preserve them for the foreign steward, or bailiff, or soldier. And though there were but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked

for an infant of one night, nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the steward, or bailiff, or soldier of the Foreigners. And, however long he might be absent from the house, his share or his supply durst not be lessened, although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night, if the means of a supply could not otherwise be procured. . . . And an ounce of silver *findruni* for every nose, besides the royal tribute afterwards every year; and he who had not the means of paying it had himself to go into slavery for it" (5). The weakened kings of Cashel could make no opposition to plundering expeditions that swept the country from sea to sea. The Annals tell little of Cellachán, successor of the abbot-king—that in 941 he was taken hostage to Ailech and that in 944 he won a victory, in which many were slain, over a rival claimant to the throne, Cennétig of the Dál gCais or Thomond; and that he died in 954. A king Maelfotharlaugh is only once mentioned in the Annals at his death in 957; Dubdabairenn was slain by his own people in 959; and Fergraidh had the same fate in 961; Cellachán's son Donnchad died in 963.

Cellachán himself (ancestor of the Mac Carthaig family who were rulers of Desmond after their expulsion from Cashel) became in a later generation hero of one of the romantic tales which, in the furious strife of family rivalries, were used to revive the glories of ruined dynasties, and buttress up claimants scarcely upheld by fading hopes. The famous saga of the "victorious Cellachán of Cashel" was a counterblast of the Eóganachta to the saga of Brían Boru, the hero of the rival house of the Dál gCais. The saga tells of Cellachán's forlorn wanderings throughout the desolated Munster with his "mottled bag round his neck," seeking charity for his "melodious clerical offices," while he spied out the fortresses and strongholds, lands and woods, if he should be driven to fight for his territory. It recounts the great words and speech of the queen his mother, who forced the rejection of Cennétig of the Dál gCais, and the election of her

son by the seven free *tuatha*, when they put their hands in his hand, and placed the crown on his head at Glennamain of Cashel. "Their spirits were raised at the grand sight of him. For he was a king for great stature, and a brehon for eloquence, and a learned saga-man for knowledge, and a lion for daring deeds." Then follow the "royal battles" of Cellachán. At Waterford he was driven back by a fleet from Dublin. Captured by guile, on some enticing promise of a Scandinavian princess, he was carried from Dublin to Armagh for safe keeping; and thence his messengers brought word to Munster—"if I am carried away from Ireland let the men of Munster take their ships and follow me;" on which the Munster host marched to his rescue by Athenry and Sligo and Assaroe, and thence eastward to Armagh. The enemy fled, bearing away Cellachán to Dundalk, where their ships lay. But a fleet gathered from the whole coast had already left Munster and was nearing Dundalk. "Give honour to Cellachán in the presence of the men of Munster!" cried Sitric; "let him even be bound to the mast! For he shall not be without pain in honour of them." And Cellachán from his place of torment lifted his head and sang:

> "I see what your champions do not see,
> Since I am at the mast of the ship,
> A fleet that will not flee to the sea;
> It is a place of watching where I am."

The Irish fleet was victorious, the bonds of Cellachán were cut by an heroic follower, and he was borne back to Cashel by the men of Munster. Of this passionate tale there is no word in the Annals. We only know from them that Cellachán died in 954, bearing with him some fading remnant of Cashel leadership in the south—a glimmer of which illuminates the saga of the last glory of the ancient dynasty (6).

In the north there was the same story as in the south of renewed strength and order in the attack, but it was

there met by increasing organization of the Irish forces in defence.

The half-dozen years before 922 probably marked the time of the most complete ravaging of Ireland in a universal campaign. In 916 the defence of the country fell to the high-king Niall Glundubh. His mother Lann, sister of Cearbhall king of Ossory, had a famous history as wife of two high-kings and mother of two: her first husband Mael Seachlinn († 860) was father of Flann, who succeeded him as high-king and died in 916: by her marriage with Áed Finnliath († 879) she was the mother of Niall Glundubh. He opened his reign by celebrating the long-forsaken Fair of Tailtiu. His first hosting in 917 was with the forces of the northern and southern Uí Neill to aid the south by waging war on the "Genti" in the middle land between Waterford and Limerick, near Clonmel. By their strong reinforcements they drove him back. He at once made alliance with the king of Leinster to attack the Norsemen of Waterford. The two armies fortified themselves in the field, face to face with the enemy for three weeks. Niall urged the king to attack from his post. The Norsemen, however, took the lead, holding their position against Niall while their main body attacked and routed the men of Leinster at Cenn Fúait, close to the harbour on the Leinster side. There is no word of any men of Munster in the fight, and the Norsemen held Waterford without challenge till the Norman invasion.

In 918 Niall attacked the army in Dublin, where the invaders posted on the Liffey, within a ride of Tailtiu on one side, and on the other intriguing with the men of Leinster and Ossory, were a formidable menace. The wide confederation of the northern Irish ranged with him is shown by the list of the twelve kings slain at his side, among them the king of east Ulster, the kings of Brega, of the middle kingdom, Conchobor royal heir of Tara, Flaithbertach royal heir of In Fochla. Sitric's new host met him on the north bank of the

Liffey near the present Islandbridge, and in the "battle of Dublin" or the "battle of Cell-mo-Shámhóg," so called from a neighbouring church, Niall was mortally wounded. His heroic reign, brief and stormy (7), has left a perpetual remembrance in the surname O'Neill. The term Uí Neill is a race name that goes back to the king of the Nine Hostages; while O'Neill, the earliest instance in Ireland of a family surname (save that of O'Ruairc in the tenth century), is one which could only properly be given to the descendants of Niall Glundubh. The first O'Neill named in history is Domnall, son of Muirchertach and grandson of Niall, king of Ireland from 956 to 980.

The battle of Cell-mo-Shámhóg (919) was the last effort of the Irish to drive the Foreigners out of Dublin. If later Annals record battles and victories and casting out of the Norsemen, it was only the expelling of leaders, and no attempt was possible to interfere with the citizens, or to hold Dublin for the king of Ireland.

A campaign from Dublin, beginning with the destruction of the stone church at Kells and the massacre of many martyrs there in 920, opened universal war of the Foreigners on the north. Their armies raided the wealthy monastic settlements and occupied Armagh. In 921 the triumphant king Sitric left Dublin, said the Annals, "through Divine power;" in fact, however, his journey was to take up a kingdom in Northumbria. "A most cruel king of the Norsemen," his cousin or brother Gottfrich, took his place—devastating the north and plundering Armagh. The death of the twelve kings at Cell-mo-Shámhóg was avenged by Muirchertach son of Niall, who met and defeated the Foreigners with great slaughter near Armagh in 921, so that only a few escaped "by aid of the glimmering of the night." In spite, however, of raids and ravages no Scandinavian settlements were established in the north, though trading stations on the coast were continued and probably some new ones opened. In his turn Gottfrich on Sitric's

death took his way across the sea for the Northumbrian kingdom, and being expelled from it returned to Dublin (927). After a few years of war with the rival kingdom of Limerick (which had been ravaging Clonmacnois and the islands of the Shannon), and with the warriors of Waterford, he " died of anguish " in 934.

Donnchad king of Meath succeeded Niall Glundubh as high-king. But the hero of the war for twenty-two years was Niall's son Muirchertach king of Ailech, Donnchad's designate successor, now leading a general rally of the Irish to clear the Norsemen out of northern Ireland. His first battle against Gottfrich ravager of the north was on the field in 921, where none were saved but by " the glimmering of the night." In 926 he defeated the Foreigners at Carlingford and carried off two hundred of their heads; and in the next January won another victory at the bridge of Cluain-na-Cruimther the " meadow of the priests " near Anagassan, when the son of Gottfrich was killed in battle with great slaughter; and half his host besieged for a week at Ath Cruithne until Gottfrich himself came from Dublin to their aid. Trouble had meanwhile arisen between Muirchertach and the high-king, for in 927 he made " interruption of the Fair " of Tailtiu against Donnchad, in consequence it was said " of a challenge of battle between them; but God separated them without any slaughter or bloodshed." Possibly Donnchad, jealous of his great fame, accused him of aiming at the high-kingship before his time: or there may have been a dispute about Donnchad's daughter whom Muirchertach married. But the quarrel was not enduring. In 932 Muirchertach was again warring near Dublin, where he slew earl Torulbh, son of king Sitric and cousin of the reigning king Gottfrich. The next year when foreign fleets were swarming on the northern coasts and in the lakes, he met a plundering host and defeated them so that they left two hundred and forty heads and their spoils. As king of Ailech he joined the hosting of Donnchad king of Tara in 938 to

besiege the Foreigners at Ath Cliath and devastated the land as far as Mullaghmast, which shows that the Foreigners had support from Leinster. There was a demolition of Ailech by the Norsemen in 939 against Muirchertach, who was carried off to their ships; but was immediately ransomed—"God redeemed him from it." Again in 940 he joined with the king of Ireland to lead a united hosting against Leinster and Munster, and took away hostages. His victories were renowned a century after his death, when a list of his triumphs was recorded by Flann of Monasterboice (8), who gives an expedition by sea against the Norsemen of the Hebrides which is also mentioned in the genealogies, and by the Four Masters in 939: "A fleet [was conducted] by Muirchertach son of Niall, and he carried off much plunder and booty from the Insi-Gall after gaining victory and triumph."

The most daring feat of Muirchertach was the hosting in 941, the year of the birth of Brían Boru, which gave him his famous title "of the Leather Cloaks" (9). In a winter of "great frost so that lakes and rivers were passable" Muirchertach saw his opportunity as heir designate to assert the prerogative of a high-king on progress round his territory to demand hostages as token of his authority. Gathering about a thousand picked men, he gave to each a protecting cloak of prepared skin, and set out from Ailech on a triumphant circuit of the island, claiming from each province in turn hostages for the high-king. A contemporary poem tells of this amazing journey where each man's cloak was his house and shelter; when music stirred the men to dance heavy noise was made by the shaking of the hard skins. Keeping their left side to the sea they marched, carrying off the king of east Ulster as they passed east of Loch Neagh to Mag Rath and Glenn Righe to the delightful fair Mag nEalta—the rich lands by Dublin. From the Tara country, the home of Donnchad's race, and ruled by him as king, Muirchertach demanded no

hostage. Encamped near Dublin, where he had secret friends, he took abundant food and tribute from the surrounding lands of the Foreigners, and brought away as hostage "Sitric the wealthy." The hosting was pursued by the men of Leinster and the race of Cennselach (who had probably been drawn under the influence of Dublin) to Glen Mama, and to the old royal fort at "cold Ailenn" (near the modern Kildare), where that night the snow was driving from the north-east. They stayed a night at Belach Mugna, in a frost so hard that as they lay the snow did not "wet their fine hair." Ossory yielded to them. Moving hither and thither along the border-lands to secure the submission of various *tuatha* "with cheerfulness and with willingness," they ravaged the country of the Dési and prepared to strike into Cashel. There was a sudden battle, when Muirchertach was called from his game of chess, and the warriors threw off their leather cloaks for the fight. In the end Muirchertach received as hostage Cellachán, king of Munster, and "brought him back in subjection to Donnchad." At Kilmallock the army stopped a night, and then turned their faces north to "Conn's Half," by Kincora and the formidable snowbound passes over the wild hills of the Dál gCais: "I did not meet since I left my home a pass like unto Cretshalach" (now Cratlagh). The king of Connacht went with them as hostage willingly, without a fetter. And by Mag Ai and Crúachu they marched to the ford of Seanach, now Ballyshannon, and with mighty feasting and content went on to the glorious festival of the heroes at Ailech. "Attend each man of them," Muirchertach sent word to his queen, "as a high-king should be attended." First in order of honour he named his hostages, "the kings of Erin in fetters," and then the "hundred heroes of distinguished valour, of the race of the fierce fair Cenél nEógain." For a few months the royal hostages were liberally entertained after their rank, and were then dutifully handed over to the high-king of Ireland.

The feat was astounding. Muirchertach had chosen a season when the foreign marauders were frozen into their harbours, but never before had fighting-men been called out for winter war, and never had such a period of service been demanded. Through prolonged hardship he inspired in his soldiers an enthusiasm to match his own. A " circuit of Ireland " in ordinary conditions lay within the unspoken right of every high-king. But inherent power—even if it passed to the heir designate—could only be used by a leader of outstanding quality, one who could command both circumstance and men. High-kings in normal times preferred little or no interference with the kingdoms of their neighbours. There was nothing normal in Muirchertach's heroic exploit, his last achievement before he too, like his father twenty years earlier, fell in battle with the invaders. In 943 Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks, king of Ailech, and " the Hector of the West of the world," was killed on a Sunday, March 4th, by the son of Gottfrich king of the Dubh-Gaill, near Ardee. The high-king Donnchad died in the next year, 944 : and with these catastrophes came the only breach in the alternate succession between the Uí Neill of north and south that happened between 734 and 1002.

Donnchad should have been succeeded by the king of Ailech ; but Congalach of the southern Uí Neill, now made king out of his turn, was doubtless elected for his fame as a successful man of war. Dublin raiders, perpetually recruited from the seas, had grown in strength and daring. In 934–935 they had plundered in Meath to the treasure-centres of Lagore and Knowth, and west to Clonmacnois, when " they stayed two nights in it, a thing that hath not been heard of from ancient times." Congalach in 944 with the king of Leinster attacked Ath Cliath and carried off jewels and treasures and great spoil. A raid on Clonmacnois in 946 was avenged by him in the battle of Slane (947) when he defeated the famous king of Dublin, Amlaibh Cuaran. In 948 he

slew the son of king Gottfrich and sixteen hundred of his men, and the next year led a hosting which wasted O'Meith. The Foreigners in revenge besieged Meath and Brega for six months, and burned the belfry of Slane, with the crozier of S. Erc, "the bell that was the best of bells," and the lector and a multitude along with him; while a royal heir of Ireland was killed after slaughtering two thousand or more of the enemy. In 951 the whole of the churches round the Tara region were plundered, and three thousand men or more captured, together with a great booty of cows and horses, of gold and silver. Congalach was killed fighting in Leinster at the head of many other kings against the Dublin army under Amlaibh Cuaran (956). It was in the last year of his life that Domnall son of Muirchertach led the Irish in the Norse method of war, carrying their ships from the mouth of the Bann across Loch Neagh, and along the Blackwater and over Oriel to Loch Erne and Loch Oughter (955); a feat repeated in 963 under the same Domnall, then high-king (956–980), when ships were borne across Slíab Fúait to Loch Ennel near Mullingar, "which had not been done from most ancient times." The object was purely military, and evidently could never have been accomplished on inferior light roads over soft ground. Domnall's life of ceaseless war ended in Armagh "after penitence" (980).

It has been supposed that absence of national feeling, and petty wars among the Irish, handed over their country to the enemy. The Annals do not support this theory. If the Gaill had depended on internal strife they could have overrun all east Ulster, the place of their first settlements and the region of incessant historical conflicts. In Middle Ireland the old battle-area from the Liffey to the Shannon was right in the line of the most profitable Scandinavian raids from Dublin to Clonmacnois and Limerick; and the Gaill were astute enough from 858 onwards to make use of family dissensions and border feuds, so as to find allies on occasion

among princes entangled in local quarrels (10). They formed alliances round Dublin, as for example in Ossory or Leinster or Brega. But in this middle land the "Genti" took no hold. Their permanent settlements were by the sea. Dublin itself held land north of the city probably equal in extent to the greater part of the modern county—stretching beyond the fertile plain still known as Fingal, and the "water of Gabhar" which from the site of the ancient lake (now drained and known as Lagore) flows through Swords.

The memory of the "kingdom of Dublin" was preserved for a thousand years in the maritime jurisdiction of the later Dublin Corporation over a long line of coast from the river Delvin below Drogheda to Arklow—where down to the time of Elizabeth and of the Georges the city had authority to receive custom and exercise all Admiralty rights, the Lord Mayor being "Admiral of Dublin." Four inlets of the sea, or "fiords" as the Norse called them—Strangford and Carlingford to the north—and Wexford and Waterford to the south—lay outside the actual kingdom, but were closely connected with it. Settlers in Waterford occupied a district known as Gall-tir or "foreign territory," later called Gaultiere. Its kings after 913 were at times of the same family as the Dublin kings, and the port was sometimes independent and sometimes united to Dublin. Wexford seems to have been pre-eminently a peaceful trading settlement; the first part taken by the Wexford Norsemen in Irish wars was in the defence of their town against the Anglo-Normans. The Danes of Limerick also took a stretch of land for their "kingdom." But nowhere did the strangers venture far from the security of their harbours and fleets. In spite of their victories and raids, their multiplying numbers and their skill, they were never able in face of the national resistance to occupy the country, and made no attempt to settle down except on the coast with the sea-road open. Through two hundred years of war no Irish royal house

was destroyed, no kingdom was extinguished, and no supremacy of the Danes replaced the national supremacy of the Irish. "Though the oppression was great," wrote MacFirbis in 1650, "and though the disturbances caused by foreigners . . . in Erin in that way were frequent, it has not been told that they laid a holding in it for their descendants (11)." Dr. MacNeill notes the curious fact that it was the Celtic-speaking countries —Brittany, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—which yielded no more than a small part of their land to the Scandinavian invaders.

The ordered settlements of the Foreigners marked a passing over of power from the warrior to the merchant. Dublin harbour was a natural meeting-ground of peoples, a centre of traders on the southern voyage from Scandinavia and the islands to Gaul and Spain, or making their way by York or by Bristol to the North Sea and the Baltic, and by the "Eastway" to Russia and Constantinople. Before long the city became a common mart—Icelandic sailors, men of Norway, and royal speculators landing from a cruise to sell their merchandise or their plunder. There in 871 Olaf and Ivar had trafficked with their two hundred ships' lading of spoil and captives, Angles, Britons, and Picts. In course of time almost every king of Norway sailed his fleet into the harbour, to drive off the rival Dane, to broaden his traffic, to spy out some new store of merchandize, to load up with corn and meat. Biorn, son of king Harald Fairhair, owner of trading ships, was known as "the Merchant" or "Freightman," a title not thought derogatory to the kingly class of rovers (12). "You must this summer make a trading voyage," said earl Hakon to his friend Thori Clack, "as is customary now with many, and go to Dublin in Ireland." To Dublin came "Gille the Russian merchant" with the "Greek hat" to buy captives for the Iceland market. According to the

story that Brían Boru exacted from the Dublin Norsemen a tribute of a hundred and fifty vats of wine the trade was rich, whether from the Moselle or Bordeaux or Spain. A ninth-century poem on the Hill of Allen by the Curragh tells of its "wine barque upon the purple flood" (13). Notices in Scandinavian tales of merchant voyages show a good business in kingly cargoes of cloth. Dublin became the centre of a mighty confederation. Members of the same line were kings in Dublin, in Man, and in York. They married into the chief houses of Ireland, Alba, and the Hebrides, and gave leading settlers to Iceland. The Irish Sea swarmed with fleets of swift longships with from ninety to a hundred and fifty rowers or fighting men on board. Active commerce across England can be traced by names recorded in Domesday Book of Norse and Irish emigrants—towns and villages from Cheshire to Yorkshire known as *Irebi* or *Iribi*, Old Norse for "the township of the Irishman" (maybe a Norse emigrant)—and Norse-Irish personal names such as Gilemichel, Ghilapatrick, Maccus, Glunier or Iron Knee, Finegal or a White Foreigner. Irish and Norse, in fact, were allied in the common trade of the kings of Dublin and of York (14).

War was no longer the real concern of the Foreigners. It is true that the kingdoms of Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick had some political interests; and cities in Ireland, like the trading cities of Italy and other European countries, maintained armies and waged wars to further their own purposes. But they recognized no external authority. They sought no foreign allies for their wars, but trafficked for aid in Ireland itself. They were in fact steadily taking their place in the national life. The will of the chapmen as against the warrior was for compromise and a reasonable safety: "lading is less than life" (15), they held. To practical men of affairs who had settled abroad for business trading agreements were more profitable in the long run than mere pillage and slaughter. From the "Book of Rights"

we learn that the Gaill settled about Dublin paid tribute to the king of Leinster—seven hundred cloaks a mere part of it (16). After the middle of the tenth century the history of the Scandinavians in Ireland, in spite of incursions from outlying parts such as Man, Galloway, the Hebrides, and scattered islands, is the history of a gradual drawing together of the peoples into a community with common interests. Settlements purely commercial increased along the coasts till the Annals no longer found it worth while to mention occurrences so common and normal—settlements reaching from Larne, the most northerly point, by Carlingford, Dundalk, Drogheda, Dalkey (*dealg*, *dolk*, a thorn), Howth, Lambay, Wicklow, Arklow, Wexford, Helwick, Cork, to Smerwick the farthest to the west. Traders may have bargained then just as they bargain now. A few years ago a Danish schooner from Marsthal sailed into the little Irish harbour of Ardglass. Getting into port the crew trafficked for herrings, counting out a hundred and ninety-five barrels by "chequers," while the Ardglass men checked the number on notched sticks. Neither knew one word of the other's tongue. So the Danes did business and sailed away, as their forefathers had probably done a thousand years ago. Merchants were pre-occupied with their own business: and two hundred years later, at the Norman invasion, Giraldus describes the old Danish forts vacant and neglected, while on the other hand the harbours were full of activity and business. "It is quite certain," says Dr. MacNeill, "that any harbour or trading station which is found to have existed in the time of the first Norman invasions took its origin from a Danish colony."

The close intercourse of the Foreigners with the Irish is shown by the early and constant marriages between the two races. The Annals, of course, only mention alliances of high degree, but among ordinary people Irish names are frequent in the Foreigners' households, and Norse names among the Irish. The slave-trade had its strange

stories. A Norse saga tells of a dumb woman bought by an Icelander for her beauty at three times the price of a slave. Years later he found her talking to her child; and she confessed that her father was a king, Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks it would seem, and that since she was taken captive at fifteen years old she had spoken no word but to her little son, whom she had secretly urged to go back to Ireland: "I have fitted you out from home as best I know how and taught you to speak Irish, and so it will make no difference to you where you are brought to shore in Ireland." Another of Muirchertach's daughters, mother of the high-king Mael Sechnaill, married Amlaibh Cuaran king of Dublin, and her son Gluniarainn reigned in Dublin on his father's death. Norse warriors strengthened their position by alliances with Irish women of kingly houses. There were descendants in Iceland of Cearbhall king of Ossory († 887). His grandson Dufthak founded an Icelandic family and three of his daughters married Norsemen. His grand-daughter married Thorstein the Red, son of Olaf the White. This Olaf had himself married a daughter of Áed Finnliath, later high-king. The very legend of Cellachán, enticed to his capture by the promise of a Scandinavian princess, shows the common expectation or belief of the public. The most famous figure, the Cleopatra of her time, was Gormflaith sister of Maelmordha king of Leinster, described in a Norse saga as "the fairest of all women and best gifted in everything that was not in her own power" (that is her physical beauty), "but it was the talk of men that she did all things ill over which she had any power" (17). Irish verses tell of her "three leaps which a woman shall never take—a leap at Ath Cliath" (where she made an apparently lawless alliance with Amlaibh Cuaran, king of the Dublin Danes)—"a leap at Temair" (in her connection with Mael Seachlinn, by whom she was divorced or repudiated)—"a leap at Cashel of the goblets" (when she chose Brían Boru, who in his turn

also cast her off). No doubt there was a protest by the pure-blooded nationalists against mixed marriages, recalled for us by the saga in praise of Cellachán of Cashel: "Far from you is hereditary relationship with any Lochlannach hero" (18).

Christianity had no attractions for the sea-rovers and traders, in whom the perils of the north had bred a ruthless common sense, indifferently applied to all problems of this world or of the next. In 921 we see signs of a new tolerance shown by "a most cruel king of the Norsemen," Gottfrich, in his plundering of Armagh when "the houses of prayer, with their company of *céli Dé* and of sick, were protected by him, and the church besides, except a few houses in it which were burnt through negligence": also possibly in the bargain of the Foreigners who ravaged Kildare in 964, and allowed ransom when "its sorrows were compassionated by the wonderful piety of Niall Ua h-Eruilb, nearly all the clerics being redeemed for God's name; viz. the full of the great house of S. Brigit, and the full of the oratory, is what Niall ransomed of them with his own money." But any entry of the Scandinavians into the Christian faith was slow and intermittent. Sitric king of Dublin was temporarily converted in England about 925, but later relapsed. His successor died a pagan in 942. The son of Sitric, Amlaibh Cuaran (of the sock or the sandal, probably from his wearing Irish tanned leather shoes), took up the kingship about 951 and for thirty years reigned as the most famous of the kings of Dublin. His conversion led the way to many others, and after the victory of Mael Seachlinn over the Norse in 980 he went on pilgrimage to Iona—the first Scandinavian pilgrim from Ireland (19). But the Dublin men for the most part, even if in name Christian, held to their heathen practices and made their oaths on Thor's Ring which lay on the altar of his temple till it was carried off in 994 by the high-king Mael Sechnaill—a ring of silver and gold worn on the priest's arm during ceremonies,

and for greater solemnity dipped in the blood of sacrifices. There were not enough converts to require a bishop till 1035. It was even later, somewhere about 1100 A.D., before Scandinavians began to write down the story of their people in their own tongue. For centuries to come they clung to the profitable slave-trade: the many high-born Irish ladies and "fair Irish maids" carried away in this traffic are noted in Scandinavian stories. The political propaganda of the later romantic "Wars of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," describing the retaliation of the Irish in the plunder of Limerick (968), seizing "their soft youthful bright matchless girls, their blooming silk-clad young women, and their active large and well-formed boys," illustrates the literary perversion that followed such traffic: as a stipend in the "Book of Rights" from the king of Cashel to the king of Cnoc Aine of "ten Foreigners without Gaelic" (imported slaves) is a sign of public degradation.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XVIII.

(1) P. 339. Eoin MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 261.
(2) P. 340. *Ib.*, pp. 262 *seq.*
(3) P. 340. Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 72.
(4) P. 341. Osborn Bergin, in "Miscellany to Kuno Meyer," p. 357.
(5) P. 342. "War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill," pp. 49, 51.
(6) P. 343. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 266. For the saga of Cellachán see "Caithreann Cellachain Caisil;" trans. Alex. Bugge. Christiania, 1905.
(7) P. 345. See the poems of Flann Mainistrech in *Archivum Hibernicum*, II, pp. 52 *seq.*
(8) P. 347. *Archivum Hibernicum*, II, 36, 79–80.
(9) P. 347. "The Circuit of Ireland," by Cormacan Eigeas, 942. (Ed. John O'Donovan for Irish Arch. Soc., 1841.)
(10) P. 351. Such alliances are frequent. Four Masters, 857: "Annals of Ulster," 863, 868, etc.

The Ostmen of Dublin at the battle of Hafersfiord in 872 had Irish allies, or "Westmen" distinguished by their "white shields" (possibly of wicker). It is suggested that they may have been led by Cearbhall king of Ossory or his son-in-law. (Haliday: "Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin," p. 95; Laing: "Sea Kings of Norway," I, 287.)

(11) P. 352. "Fomorians and Norsemen": Alex. Bugge, pp. 10–11.
(12) P. 352. Laing: "Sea Kings of Norway," I, 305–306.
(13) P. 353. "Hail Brigit": Old Irish Poem (trans. Kuno Meyer).
(14) P. 353. See Bugge: "Norse Settlements in the British Islands" (*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, IV, pp. 176–178).
(15) P. 353. "Njal Saga," II, 8.
(16) P. 354. "Book of Rights," p. 219.
(17) P. 355. "The fairest of all women"—"Njal Saga," II, 323. Her "three leaps"—Four Masters, II, p. 821.
(18) P. 356. "Caithreann Cellachain Caisil" (trans. Alex. Bugge, Christiania, 1905).
(19) P. 356. Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 356.

CHAPTER XIX

BRÍAN KING OF MUNSTER

With the coming of Brían Boru, born in the village of Bóromha near the modern Killaloe, a new force appeared in Irish history (1).

In the Ulster Annals the history of Brían Boru is brief. Born in 941, his first act recorded there is at the age of thirty-seven (978) to avenge his brother's death. He is not mentioned again for twenty years, till in 998, then fifty-seven years old, he along with Mael Seachlinn the high-king took hostages of the Foreigners for their submission to the Irish, and led a hosting through Leinster. In 999 (on this one occasion he is called "king of Cashel") at Glen Mama he routed the Foreigners of Dublin and the Leinster men, and went afterwards into Ath Cliath, which he pillaged. In 1000 he made a hosting with Leinster into Breg against Mael Seachlinn: in 1002 a hosting to Athlone, where he took hostages of Connacht and Meath, and with Mael Seachlinn at Dundalk led away pledges of the northern kings. Between 1003 and 1012 he made eight circuits or hostings in the provinces of the northern Half, in one of which (1004) he laid an offering of gold on the altar in Armagh; in another (1011) he was in camp with Mael Seachlinn. In 1007 Cuchonnact, chieftain of Sil-Anmchada in Connacht, was treacherously "slain by Brían." His wife, daughter of Cathal king of Connacht, died in 1009. In 1013 he led a hosting to "Ath-in-chairthinn" (not identified), where he stayed three months. He constructed numerous fortresses, some in his own country. His son Murchad was warring in south

Leinster. When the Leinstermen and the Foreigners made war against him, Brían and the men of Munster encamped at Slíab-Mairci and plundered Leinster to Ath Cliath, the son of Mael Seachlinn fighting on his side. Finally in 1014 Brían, now for the first time styled "king of Ireland," along with Mael Seachlinn "king of Tara," led a hosting to Ath Cliath against the men of Leinster and the Foreigners and fought the "valorous battle . . . for which no likeness has been found." This terse and inexact biography expands somewhat at the close. When Brían lay dead on the field of Clontarf the annalist gave him the title of "*ardrí* of the Gaedhil of Ireland, and of the Foreigners and Britons, the Augustus of all the north-west of Europe" (2).

Thus in his life of seventy-three years only the last sixteen are noted by the northern annalists as having in them anything worth recording. The reserve and brevity of the tale give us a measure of the enormous difficulties that confronted Brían. They illustrate the indignant hostility of the Uí Neill, and of orthodox tradition, at the adventure of one of an obscure house, little known save to its own rough forests and hill fastnesses, who achieved not only the kingship of Cashel but the lordship of all Ireland in a sense new to ancient history. The story of Brían, so carefully concealed in the Annals of Ulster, is amplified in the impassioned writings of his admirers, whose propaganda, with its later additions of poetic fables, may mislead as much as the calculated omissions of the orthodox annalists.

The kingdom of the Dál gCais, Thomond or North Munster (occupying the eastern half of the present county of Clare), which had been in the time of the Five Provinces a part of Connacht, was by the division into Seven Provinces included in Munster. Some traditional ties may have lingered on from its older history. As a border territory it had strengthened itself by enduring friendships and alliances with adjoining *tuatha* of Connacht—Aidne, Uí Maine, and the Delbna (3). Ruled

by princes of the Eóganacht line it was a "free" state under the Cashel kings. It first comes into note under king Lorcan, grandfather of Brían, of whom the story goes that the high-king (879–916) Flann Sinna (of the Shannon) encamped his army on the plain of Mag Adhair by the mound four miles from Tulla where the Dál gCais chiefs were inaugurated under an ancient tree. When he contemptuously sat down there to play a game of chess, Lorcan called his hosting for a surprise and defeated the high-king in a three days' fight (4). After 920, when the Danes of Limerick seemed about to hold Munster as firmly as the men of Dublin controlled Leinster, the helpless rulers of Cashel were challenged by Lorcan and his son Cennétig. On the death of Flaithbertach in 944, Cennétig demanded election as king of Cashel, but was defeated in battle by Cellachán.

In eighteen years after Flaithbertach's death five kings reigned and disappeared in Cashel, leaving no record but the dates of their extinction, two of them slain by their own people. After these unfortunates came two shadowy "royal heirs," sons of the king slain in 959. The place of the enfeebled race was claimed by other branches of the Eóganachta.

One line of this race known as the Uí Eachach (5), "lords of Desmond" or south Munster, had their ancient capital in Rath Raithlenn, some six miles north of Bandon (6), whence they ruled from Cork west to Mizen Head and Bantry Bay, over a larger territory than any other of the kings in Munster, even of Cashel itself. The royal city was said by legend to be named after the nurse of the king Corc known to Patrick: in bardic poetry "Rathcorc" was the common title. The central fort remains with its triple ramparts, round which were ranged a dozen lesser raths still existing, and many others (some even in living memory) now levelled to the ground—raths of the guards and fighting men, of the "harper of the hill," whose name is even now remembered in the name of the town-land "Rath-Culleen," of the

chief trumpeter, of the poets, the women, the door-keeper. Mac Liag, Brían's court historian, described the famous capital, with the fort of Sadbh, daughter of Brían, the Road of Chariots on the north, the Ford of Spoils on the east, the Road of the Mules "below" (7). There the patron saint of Cork, S. Finbar, had been born, son of the "chief metal-worker" or armourer of the king (*c.* 570). The lord of Raithlenn stood by Cormac at Belach Mugna in 908, and was slain with him (8). In the practical anarchy of the south that followed the battle the centre of power was gradually pushed back from Cashel into Desmond, and rising ambitions added to the misfortunes of the province. Maelmuadh king of the Uí Eachach (born *c.* 930) claimed in 959 the succession to Cashel as being of the elder line, "for Eógan Mór was senior to Cormac Cas." He took hostages of Munster as security for the allegiance of the province (9).

Other claimants however had arisen in Thomond, or north Munster—the vigorous stock of the Dál gCais, who in their lesser territory boldly claimed Eóganacht descent from Ailill Olom son of Mug Nuadat, the hero who in the third century divided Erin with Conn of the Hundred Battles, and with him shared the renown of the two lines which had "sustained the sovereignty of Erinn from the time of Éremón son of Miledh and Éber his brother and from the beginning of the world" (10). The two sons of Cennétig, Mathgamain (Mahoun) and Brían, were hard-pressed by the Danes of Limerick, whose vast fortified camp at the mouth of the Fergus as it falls into the Shannon below the city held the military site that was selected in 1277 by Thomas de Clare as his headquarters and castle of Bunratty for the subjection of Thomond. They kept up a guerrilla war with the Foreigners from the fastnesses of forests and deserts, where their followers, dispersed in caves and hidden huts and knotty wet roots of the wood, scant of food, fought with no quarter on either side. When Mahoun and the Danes, each "tired of the other," agreed on a time of

truce, Brían indignantly fell back deeper into the waste solitudes, " because however small the injury he might do to the Foreigners he preferred it to peace." In this bitter conflict his little band slew the enemy in twos and three and fives, " and when he inflicted not evil on them in the day time he was sure to do so in the next night, and when he did it not in the night he was sure to do it on the following day." Wretched, unpitied, wearied, his people were cut off till it was reported he had but fifteen followers alive. An old poet composed a talk of the brothers—Mahoun's grave lament for the slain, among whom Brían now stood alone in his desperate wars, and Brían's noble defence of the dead. A prose writer gives the bitterness of Brían's reproach to his brother—that Lorcan would never have made such a truce as he, Mahoun, had made with the Danes—Lorcan who gave not submission to the king of Erinn, or to the Five Provinces of Erinn, for as much time as that in which he could have played one game of chess on the green of Mag Adhair. When Mahoun retorted that " he would not like to leave the Dál gCais dead in following him as Brían had left the most of his people," the answer was swift—it was hereditary, said Brían, for all the Dál gCais to die as their fathers had done before them, but it was not natural or hereditary to them to submit to insult or contempt, and it was no honour to them to abandon to dark Foreigners and black grim Genti the inheritance which their fathers and grandfathers had defended in battle even against the chiefs of the Gaedhil. The quarrel between the supposed weak and yielding Mahoun and Brían of the resolute purpose was evidently one of great bitterness—the precursor of the second and fatal difference between the two brothers.

An assembly of the kingdom was then called to decide on peace or war, when Brían won the day. The Dál gCais (in diplomatic phrase " by counsel of Mahoun ") voted as with the voice of one man to expel the Foreigners and free Cashel of the kings, " the Ailech of Munster and

the Tara of Leth Moga"—the place of their origin and their ancient birth-right. Gathering allies from the Eóganachta of the west, and aided by the Connacht Delbna, they marched to Cashel the year after the death of its king, son of Cellachán, in 963. It was a defiance of Ivar king of Limerick, who claimed a wide territory. Ivar, having murdered the chiefs most friendly to the Dál gCais, gathered his host to attack Cashel. The two armies met in 967 at Sulcoit, the sallow-wood near Tipperary, in a fight that lasted from sunrise till mid-day, when the Foreigners were routed with great massacre—Brían "chief in the combat," along with Cathal of the Delbna-mór "king-soldier and champion of Erin" (whose land lay on both sides of the Shannon north of the town of Roscommon), in friendship and kinship with the Dál gCais. The victors pursued the fugitives in the "mighty rout" over the great plain till evening, and through the night carried on their march to Limerick. The fort was sacked "and the good town reduced to red fire." Every captive "that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved." Ivar was driven oversea, his stewards and billeted mercenaries slain or cast out, and Mahoun acknowledged king of Cashel; he "who first swept the Foreigners out of west Munster" (968).

The challenge was thus thrown down to Maelmuadh king of Desmond, who ten years before had asserted by taking hostages his lordship of Munster (11); and to his ally across the Galtees, Donnabhan of the Uí Fidgenti, king of what is now county Limerick from Bruree to the Shannon (12). It seems that these kings, "more jealous of the Dál gCais than fearful of the Danes," had taken no part in the battle of Sulcoit, and Mahoun was able to establish himself in a disputed and perilous rule as king of Munster for half-a-dozen years (970–976). A new settlement may have been indicated by the visitation in 973 of Munster by the *comarb* of Armagh, "and he obtained his demand" of tribute from the south (13).

Dangers however had not abated. After a year Ivar had returned in 969 with a great fleet, and entrenched himself on the western harbour of Limerick and the islands of the Shannon, with his headquarters on Inis-Cathaig in the monastery of the abbot-king Flaithbertach; whence he made many spoils and battles, and apparently bargained with Maelmuadh of Desmond and Donnabhan of the Uí Fidgenti, still not so much drawn to him by love of the Foreigners as by hatred and jealousy towards the Dál gCais. Mahoun seems to have yielded before the formidable combination. According to the tradition of the poets, he "shunned Brían" (14), as he had done nine years before in the conflict over terms of submission to the foe. Deliberately he himself "went into the house of Donnabhan," the formal sign of submission and renouncing supremacy (15). From him he was probably to proceed to yield allegiance to his rival the king of Desmond; for the legend tells that he had first secured the protection of the *comarb* of Barri or Finbar, the saint of Rath Raithlenn and founder of Cork, that he should not be killed or blinded. The story goes that Mahoun was sent on by Donnabhan to Maelmuadh, who had remained with the *comarb* at Raithin Mor in Fermoy, despatching his men to meet Mahoun at Cnoc-an-Rebhraidh or Slíab Caein, the modern Slieve Riach, on the borders of Limerick and Cork. There he met his mysterious death. It was reported that "Maelmuadh instructed his people when Mahoun should come into their hands to kill him forthwith. Mahoun therefore was killed by Maelmuadh, and it would have been better for him that he had not done so, for it proved to be a deed of great ruin to him." What were the true facts we can never know, so overlaid was the story for many years to come with the lively inventions of partisan pamphleteers and propagandists. Their fables can but deepen the tragedy of that day. For more than five centuries there had been no challenge to the rule of the Cashel dynasty; and the bitterness of the present strife

was none the less keen when it had become fatally clear that the ancient line had lost in the last seventy years honourable renown, and the power to rule or protect their province.

Brían became the avenger of his brother; "and he was not a stone in the place of an egg; and he was not a wisp in the place of a club; but he was a hero in the place of a hero; and he was valour after valour."

Brían Boru, so called from his birth in the village Bóromha, was closely bound up with that region (16). The fort that stood where the Shannon issues from Loch Derg was still known in 1797 as "Brían's fort" and is even now locally called "Ballyboroo." Cenn-coradh or Kincora, "the head of the weir," Brían's stronghold and dwelling-place, stood in what is now Killaloe on the higher ground near the bridge, which in Brían's time was a bridge of wood. The remarkable rock famous among the bards, Craig-liath, the home of Aibhinn the banshee of the Dál gCais, where the "Banshee's well" gushes out from among the ferns, is still in legend the "house of Brían," and the field below it his "horse-park." There is no more beautiful view in Ireland than from the hills that bound Loch Derg, looking across the sacred island of Iniscealtra with its many churches, its host of ancient tombs (among them the "VII Romani" of some far unknown pilgrimage), and its round tower of Danish times. On all sides lay the woods where Brían's workmen felled the trees and built on the spot his new war-boats, slipping them down to the water till his fleet of three hundred vessels on the Shannon rivalled the Danes on inland waters.

Born in 941, Brían was three years old when his father Cennétig was beaten back from Cashel (944), and twenty-two when he marched with his brother to establish there the Dál gCais line (964). Twelve years later he was heir to the murdered king Mahoun. His stormy youth of what seemed disastrous and desperate war revealed the endurance, the defiance of compromise, the inflexible

will, which distinguished him through the changing scenes of his life—guerrilla war in woods and deserts; kingship in Cashel; high-kingship of Ireland. In all adventures he showed the same daring, the same rejection of those traditions, and those only, that had in changing times proved useless and lost their value, the same fertility in resource; and with all his audacity an endless patience. One purpose governed his life—to free his country from foreign dominion. His experience at Limerick had shown him what war can and cannot do. It was impossible to expel the Foreigners from their sea-ports. But if they remained they must not be rulers. They must be of the Irish nation and of Irish civilization. To that end the Irish people must develop a more organized central command than any Irish king in history, free from coercion of foreign piracy and war, had needed or attempted to create. If Brían was an idealist, he was not a romantic. He was perhaps the greatest "realist" Ireland has known, at all times keeping pace with a changing world. His sense of realities taught him how far he could go and when to draw back. Warrior as he was by the hard training of his youth, where any peace was possible his one object was to avoid fighting. The true dignity of his character, and his single devotion to his country's salvation, may be measured by the fact that in all the changing circumstances of his life we do not find a case in which personal humiliation or personal ambition was to him of any account.

For two years after 976 Brían's first task was to avenge his brother and secure his own command. The islands of the Shannon were attacked in 977, Ivar king of the Foreigners and two of his sons killed, and the abundant treasures of the island fortresses carried off (17). The next year he made a foray into Donnabhan's land, where another son of Ivar was sheltered. Both were slain. In 978 he sent his confidential officer to Maelmuadh to carry a challenge from his son Murchad to single combat; with a further demand from Brían that Maelmuadh

should surrender himself as atonement for the murder, or meet him after a full fortnight in open battle at Belach Lechta, a chasm in the mountain now known as Ballahoura in the region of Loch Gur and Ardpatrick (18). There fell Maelmuadh and twelve hundred of his troops, Danes and Irish. Brían's victory was immediately followed by the work of conciliation which remained the dominant purpose of his life. In 979 he married his daughter Sadbh to Maelmuadh's son Cian, with whom he made an enduring friendship. "Cian of the golden cups" (19), beyond all Irishmen in stature and beauty and generosity, "who never turned his steps backwards in battle," "who never put anyone out of his house, and who has not been put out of the house of God"—according to Mac Coise, the chief bard of Mael Seachlinn, "as gallant and generous a prince as the house of Heber ever produced"—left his name to the fortress city "the rath of Corc and Cian." Brían and Cian were together in every battle till the day of Brían's death. Cian was with him against the Danes at Portlairge (979); in Ossory and Leinster when he secured the kingship of Munster (982); at Athlone and Dundalk when he attained the kingship of Ireland; at his last battle of Clontarf (1014).

Brían was thus in 978 undisputed king of Cashel in spite of a shadowy "royal heir" († 988) of the old line, son of the king slain by his own people in 959. For the next twenty-two years his work was to re-organize and protect a shattered and distracted province. The power of the Danes in the west had been checked. But in the east the Foreigners of Waterford and Dublin had practically subdued Leinster to their control, and might now complete their mastery of south Ireland by a network of trading stations to the Shannon and Cork. Munster could not stand long with a hostile Leinster in so threatening a position, and for mere security the king of Cashel was forced to become king of Leth Moga. He carried war over the Dési, plundering even to Portlairge, and taking hostages of all the south "as the fruit of his arms

then"; even hostages of the principal churches that they should not receive rebels nor thieves to sanctuary (978–979). Ossory was next invaded, and its king taken in fetters as hostage. At Dinn Ríg on the banks of the Barrow near Leithlin Bridge, Brían compelled the homage of the two Leinster kings of the eastern and western plains of the Liffey (984). He could now advance a claim to rule from sea to sea not only over Munster, but over Leth Moga.

The work of settlement carried out by Brían was difficult and dangerous. The only clue we have to it lies in the "Book of Rights," guided by the elaborate analysis by Dr. MacNeill. It appears that a new version of Cormac's "Book" was brought out by Brían's court-poet, probably about 1000–1001 A.D., and certainly before 1014. To the old record new material was added, from which we can gather the policy designed and carried out by Brían.

In Cormac's time Munster was reckoned to contain twenty kingdoms, twelve tributary under native princes, and (leaving out Ossory) seven free states, about a third of the whole province, ruled by kings of the Eóganacht lineage (20). Brían, breaking away from the old tradition that all states founded by princes of the central dynasty were free and exempt from tribute, established a new policy. Three kingdoms in a continuous line from the Shannon to Youghal harbour, once held free, were now laid under tribute, whether as punishment for hostility or to increase the power of Cashel: the land of the Uí Fidgenti where Donnabhan had ruled; Aine, round Knockany in county Limerick; and Glennamain or Glanworth. No specific tributes however were as yet demanded from the non-exempt free states. Only three free states besides Cashel were left by Brían exempt from tribute, the kingdom of the Dál gCais, and two in the far south-west—Raithlenn from Cork to Bantry, and Loch Léin, now Killarney, where it was probably thought imprudent to diminish ancient franchises.

As for the non-free states the old tributes were changed in almost every instance, the total sum paid to Cashel being much heavier; in certain states the difference was enormous. Corca Duibhne, covering the peninsulas between the bays of Kenmare and Tralee, formerly charged with thirty cows, thirty oxen, and thirty mantles, had now to pay a thousand cows and a thousand oxen. In old days it might have been impossible for a Cashel king to levy a heavy tribute from a state at the farthest extremity of his province. Brían was powerful enough to enforce his will and enrich his resources.

But wherever Brían, whether to increase his revenue and power, or to punish hostility to his rule, replaced tradition by his revised system, his changes were made with careful regard to custom and conditions. It was probably thought necessary to conciliate so near and dangerous a neighbour as Ossory, which may have acknowledged the suzerainty of Cashel in the time of Cormac, and which Brían claimed as dependant. Ossory never yielded more than a forced and unwilling submission; and though its rulers were not of the royal race Brían did not think well to push his demand as far as the exaction of tribute. If he constantly repeated the claim to sovereignty it was because it was never established. Leinster, in his desperate conflict with the Norse for the consolidation and protection of Leth Moga, proved his great and final difficulty. An old list of the twelve free and noble races of Ireland placed six in Conn's Half, among them the men of Leinster, and the other six in Mogh's Half (21). Both the dynasties of Tara and Cashel claimed Leinster kings as vassals. Tara demanded tribute, Cashel preserved ancient memories in strange prerogatives surviving in the "Book of Rights," the right of a king of Munster to burn north Leinster; or to go with a greyish host on Tuesday over the plain of Mag Ailbhe in that kingdom (22). But the forced submission of both Ossory and Leinster was bitterly resented, and their resistance was powerfully backed by the Foreigners

of Dublin and Waterford. These two states remained in effect outside Brían's settlement of Munster. After its great defeat in 999 Leinster was declared tributary, but where there was no law or ancient custom to give authority, Brían fixed no definite tribute, but merely stated that horses, drinking-horns, gold and riches from across the sea were due to Cashel. Even in his triumph he did reverence to the ancient teaching of the learned, admitting the opposition doctrine into the "Book of Rights":

> "Though it is a good history on which I am engaged,
> It is not taught by the Leinstermen,
> It is not preserved by Conn's Half,
> The history of Ailill Olom" (23).

A poem added to the "Book of Rights" consists of a list of strongholds of the kings of Cashel, scattered all over Munster and held at various times by its kings. It is possible that the inclusion of this list may indicate both the centralizing policy of Brían, and his attention to military defence by fortified posts throughout the province. It was well known that the Scandinavians, formidable in combat, had not the art of siege. We are told that not only did Brían strengthen the duns and islands and forts of Munster, but communications were restored by his bridges and causeways and high-roads.

It might seem that the Irish, whether for defence or for trade, were preparing to take their part with the Foreigners on the seas. In the "Book of Rights" we read of Irish "ships very beautiful," "ships right beautiful," a "ship under full rigging," "the king of Cashel's own befitting beauteous ship," "the Uí Briúinn (descendants of great Niall's brother) of the ships of the seas" (24). The later saga of Cellachán boasted of Munstermen as having mastered the art of building the new ships where both oars and sails were used; in which they traded in treasures from oversea, silken raiment, and abundance of wine. It tells of "Munster of the great riches,"

"Munster of the swift ships." An old poem recalls the wealth of the great maritime state (25):

> "The Uí Eathach from Carn to Cork
> High in beauty
> Whose resolve is quiet prosperity."

The panegyrist of Cellachán even credited the Irish with imitating the Scandinavian method of raising a navy by dividing the coast into districts, each of which had to equip and man ten ships to assemble at the summons for the united war-fleet—a method which even Brían Boru with his imperial vision must have rather desired than achieved. In the "Wars of the Gaedhil and the Gaill" it is told that Brían sent forth a naval expedition composed not only of ships from Ath Cliath and Portlairge, but of the Uí Cennselach and the Uí Eachach or people of Cian on the southern coast; a fleet to levy royal tribute along the coasts of Wales and Argyll. And "Brían distributed all the tribute according to rights—a third part of it to the king of Ath Cliath; and a third to the warriors of Leinster and of the Uí Eachach of Munster; and another third to the professors of sciences and arts, and to every one who was most in need of it" (26). In this record we see Brían's first adventure in a national navy of Ireland, drawn from various peoples in a common enterprise for a common reward. It indicates the strength given to a united Munster by the added power of a long sea-line.

Like Charles the Great (every tradition of whose brilliant revival of learning and schools he must have known from Clonmacnois, where Colgu had been the correspondent of Alcuin) Brían's care was the restoration of culture and civilization. All details are now obscured, awaiting new researches by Irish scholars; but his purpose is clear—to restore national life after its ruin by the Foreigners, a life sustained by industry, art, learning and all spiritual influences. That he was deeply devout is certain. It is recorded that noble churches and their

sanctuaries were built by him; beginning it would seem in his home-land, if we may so interpret the scornful words attributed to warrior enemies confronting his despised people, "Dál gCais of the churches"—or on the other hand the alleged boast of the court bard: "the Dál gCais of the hundred churches" (27).

During the later ninth and the tenth centuries the emigration of learned men to Europe was no longer a missionary movement but a flight of refugees. A very imperfect indication of the devastating loss may be found in the notices by the Ulster Annals of the deaths of "wise men" of special fame. From 801 to 886 twelve names are given—"an excellent scribe," "the wisest of all the doctors of Europe," "the most learned of the Latinists of all Europe," "the most learned in all the histories of the Scoti," "no historian more excellent." After a long gap (886–916), the years of supposed peace, the list begins again, a mere half-dozen for the tenth century, with a significant change of phrase—"an eminent historian," "head of the learning of the island of Ireland," "the most learned of Ireland." Schools had been wrecked, libraries utterly destroyed, and there is no indication of a single Latin work written in Ireland in the tenth century (28). At the same time there can be no doubt of the inspiring force of a succession of jurists and historians, and poets who preserved the tradition of those most ancient songs in which the deeds of the kings of old and their wars were chanted. The remarkable collections first made by Kuno Meyer of poems, wise maxims, proverbs, laments, and spiritual hymns and prayers in the tenth and eleventh centuries, give us the sense of an intensity of life and a literary wealth too long forgotten.

That these have been mostly gathered from Irish manuscripts carried oversea reveals the ruin of the old libraries. Brían's zeal was for the recovery of the essential civilization of his people. He "sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge; and to buy

books beyond the sea, and the great ocean; because their writings and their books in every church and in every sanctuary where they were, were burned and thrown into water by the plunderers, from the beginning to the end; and Brían himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to every one separately who went on this service." "I have not wealth of gold or silver," words given to him in his last dying hour at Clontarf, prove at least the popular sense of his lavish generosity in the effort to restore to his country the fulness of its life.

There may have been some new development in the schools, when the "fer légind," first mentioned in the tenth century, appeared as head of the Latin school in Armagh and Slane, followed in the eleventh century by others in Kells and Monasterboice (29). The remarkable work of the scribes in the eleventh century was doubtless due to the intellectual impulse given by Brían at this time. Dr. MacNeill and Mr. Robin Flower working on independent lines have come to the same conclusion, that it was probably through his energetic revival of learning from Kincora that the basin of the Shannon became the centre of literary activity where ancient traditions were preserved through later periods. It is not impossible that the famous bardic schools of the middle ages may have owed their life, after devastations of the pagan Foreigners, to the fostering care of Brían Boru. In a district stretching from Munster into Roscommon and Leitrim a long tradition of learning was maintained down to the fifteenth century, and in their schools was handed down an enormous proportion of the material now in existence. At Clonmacnois were compiled the Annals of Clonmacnois, the Leabhar na h-Uidhre, the important collection Rawlinsin B. 502, which contains the Annals of Tigernach. The Annals of Loch Cé were associated with Loch Key near the town of Boyle in Roscommon. The law-books that have been preserved were written in the school of the MacFirbis family: Dubhaltach MacFirbis, the last of that great line, compiled "Chronicon Scot-

torum" and the "Book of Genealogies." O'Davorens, MacEgans, Clancys, had all their origin in the same district. It was only slightly to the north in Maguire's country that the Annals of Ulster were written, and O'Gara the patron of the Four Masters lived on its borders on the banks of Loch Gara. Possibly some day competent scholars will render a sorely needed service to Ireland by a scientific exploration of the course of the Shannon, to recover every fragmentary trace left of the building of Brían, or of the new centres of learning established by him, and indicate how far he was in touch with the movement on the continent, and introduced new developments in Ireland.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XIX.

(1) P. 359. Our chief source for the history of Brían Boru is the *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, or "War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill," the information in which appears to derive from a contemporary witness, although the actual composition belongs to a later date. A fragment of this text occurs in the mid-twelfth century Book of Leinster, and it has been edited from that MS., from the Trinity College MS., H. 2, 17, and from a transcript by Michael O'Clery made in 1635, now preserved in the Royal Library, Brussels, by J. H. Todd, 1867.

The events of Brían's rise to power in Munster are well related in Canon O'Mahony's "History of the O'Mahony Septs."

(2) P. 360. The Annals of Ulster do not say in the text that Brían was King of Ireland in 1003. This is in a note as having been interpolated by the translator of a particular MS.

The following dates and facts are given in the Four Masters and not in the Ulster Annals :—

983. Took Gilla-Phadraig prisoner.
984. Plundered the west of Meath.
992. Hosting with the men of Munster and Connacht to Meath, took neither cow nor person, and went thence in secret flight.
993. Had a new fleet on Loch Ree and plundered the men of Bréifne.
994. Was routed by Mael Seachlinn.
1003. King of Ireland.

(3) P. 360. Eoin MacNeill : "Phases of Irish History," p. 268.

(4) P. 361. "War of the Gaedhill and the Gaill," pp. ciii, cxvi.
(5) P. 361. From Eachaid, somewhere about 500, came the name of the house—the Uí Eachaidh of Munster. See Canon O'Mahony's "History of the O'Mahony Septs of Kinelmeky and Ivaha," pp. 18, 26.
(6) P. 361. "History of the O'Mahony Septs," pp. 11, 16.
(7) P. 362. *Ib.*, p. 15.
(8) P. 362. *Ib.*, pp. 28–29.
(9) P. 362. *Ib.*, pp. 30, 31.
(10) P. 362. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 59. For the late origin of the Eóganachta see "Celtic Ireland," p. 53, and "Phases of Irish History," pp. 126–127.
(11) P. 364. "History of the O'Mahony Septs," pp. 31 *seq.*
(12) P. 364. *Ib.*, pp. 31–32.
(13) P. 364. Annals of Ulster, 973.
(14) P. 365. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 97.
(15) P. 365. *Ib.*, pp. 97, 87.
(16) P. 366. "Antiquities of Limerick and Neighbourhood." (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Antiquarian Handbook Series No. VII.)
(17) P. 367. For Limerick trade see "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 79.
(18) P. 368. "History of the O'Mahony Septs," pp. 37–39.
(19) P. 368. *Ib.*, p. 41.
(20) P. 369. MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 74–83. The modern barony of Corkaguiney retains the name of the Corcoidh Dhuighni, but the ancient district probably included the whole of the two great peninsulas of West Kerry from Kenmare to Tralee (p. 80).
(21) P. 370. *Ib.*, pp. 58, 59, 69, 70.
(22) P. 370. "Book of Rights," p. 5.
(23) P. 371. *Ib.*, pp. 57, 59.
(24) P. 371. *Ib.*, pp. 83, 85, 161, 107.
(25) P. 372. "Cambrensis Eversus," II, 779.
(26) P. 372. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 137.
(27) P. 373. *Ib.*, pp. 87, 101.
(28) P. 373. Gougaud: "Les Chrétientés Celtiques," p. 353.
(29) P. 374. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 285.

CHAPTER XX

BRÍAN THE HIGH-KING

BRÍAN's work of restoration was perhaps made possible by a period of peace for some twenty years (978–999), when very few battles of North and South are recorded. From the crowning of Mael Seachlinn in 980 two powerful warriors divided Ireland—Brían Boru and Mael Seachlinn Mór, the "Strong Striker of Uisnech," his junior by nine years. In that year Mael Seachlinn had won the battle of Tara against the forces of Ath Cliath and the Islands, with great slaughter of the Foreigners, and the banishing of "their power from Ireland." Tigernach's Annals tell of a second attack, when he besieged the Gaill of Ath Cliath three days and nights, taking from them, according to the Four Masters (1), two thousand hostages of Erinn, one of whom was Domnall Claen king of Leinster; and issued "the famous proclamation, in which he said:—'Every one of the Gaedhil who is in the territory of the Foreigners, in servitude and bondage, let him go to his own territory in peace and happiness.' This captivity was the Babylonian captivity of Ireland, until they were released by Mael Seachlinn; it was indeed next to the captivity of hell." The king of Dublin, Amlaibh Cuaran (of the sandal), left Ireland for Iona, whether by compulsion or in penitence, the first Christian pilgrim of the Foreigners, and is said to have died there the next year.

Amid the brevities and silences of the Ulster Annals, and the uncertain tales of the "Wars of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," it is difficult to follow the conflicts of Brían and Mael Seachlinn with the now restless kings of

Connacht. We may gather from the Annals that in times of war Connacht hostings began to press in on the Tara kings, and in the tenth century came prominently into strife. Domnall the high-king devastated Connacht in 965 and took hostages from its king O'Ruairc, whom in fact he slew.

Connacht in the absence of an ordered study of its history remains a mysterious part of Ireland. It was the least changed of the provinces in the re-distribution of the Five Fifths. The older races then, as now, maintained a prominent place. Shut in by the inundating floods of the great river, the land could not support any increasing population. The hills and forests of what is now Clare made a forbidding entry from the south, the roughest part of the journey of the Leather Cloaks. To the north there was the famous passage by the coast road from Sligo across the Drowes, and the Erne at Ballyshannon—a military road corresponding in importance to the eastern highway north by Newry and Dundalk, and jealously disputed by the northern kings; as in 968 when the king of Cenél Conaill and the royal heir of Connacht were slain by the Cenél nEógain; and again in 973 when the king of Ailech warred with the Connachtmen, and their new-made king Cathal with many others was slain. Ever since the great break when the Uí Neill discarded their old home for Tara and Ailech, there was natural rancour between them and the deserted lords of Crúachu—a suspicious hostility exaggerated by the lively inventions of Ulster chroniclers. The Fir Domnann who ruled in Connacht almost to S. Patrick's time were allowed no place in the "Milesian" high-kingship by the orthodox chroniclers of the Tara line (2). Its later kings left behind them no more traces in the Annals than a bare name, till we come to the stirring career of Muirghis (792–815). But from its history Connacht should be the part of Ireland where ancient tradition had the best chance of preservation, a region favourable for the development of schools of old Irish history.

Mael Seachlinn and Brían were of necessity involved in the ancient conflict of north and south over the middle borderlands, with the old range of battle-fields, eastward on the Liffey plain and west to the Shannon and into Connacht. Disputes began early. In 982 Mael Seachlinn in contempt of the Dál gCais is said to have uprooted the ancient tree in Mag Adhair under which their kings were inaugurated—in memory perhaps of the insult inflicted by Brían's grandfather Lorcan on the high-king Flann Sinna at his game of chess. In 984 Brían took three hundred boats up the Shannon to Loch Ree, ravaging Meath to Uisnech, and all Bréifne. The next year Mael Seachlinn laid in ashes the plain of Mag Ai by Crúachu; and when the Connacht-men carried a secret depredation to his own fortress Dún-na-scíath on the shore of Loch Ennel, which they burned, and killed the king of Fir Cell, he plundered Connacht, destroyed fortified lake dwellings in rivers and marshes, and slew the chiefs. Again in 990 he was fighting in Thomond, and in 992 took great spoils out of Connacht.

On the eastern coast Mael Seachlinn defied Brían's claim to interference with or control of Leinster; and in 983, with the help of his half-brother Gluniarn son of Amlaibh, led a battle-rout of Danes and Irish against Domnall Claen king of Leinster and Ivar of Waterford, and carried off their preys. On this side, however, his war on Brían was feeble—baffled, unless he got help, by the strength of Dublin, and yet more by his troubles in Brega, which was not only ravaged by the Norsemen, but honeycombed with petty family rivalries and shifting local understandings or private compacts with the Foreigners. His difficulties may be seen by his "treacherously" killing the "royal heir of Tara" in 991; and killing the king of Luighne in the abbot's house of Donaghpatrick near Navan in 993; followed by his burning of Swords in 994, and the blinding of the son of the king of Meath in 997—outrages which possibly indicate local leagues in Brega with the Foreigners of

Dublin. Some such story may be hidden in the mysterious fall of *Lia Ailbe*, the chief monument of Mag Breg, and Mael Seachlinn's cutting of the pillar stone into four mill-stones in 999. The plain of Brega had been from ancient times the best cultivated, the richest, and doubtless the most populous part of Ireland, and its continued devastation was a serious weakening of the strength of Mael Seachlinn.

While the high-king's forces were wasted in "the plain of Meath" those of Brían were divided between two independent campaigns—on one side land-hostings on Leinster, Ath Cliath, and the Meath borders, on the other a "great marine fleet" on the Shannon. An amicable agreement was finally concluded between the two kings—Brían paralysed on one side of the island and Mael Seachlinn on the other. In 997 they met on the shore of Loch Ree where Brían had brought his fleet, and there made a mutual peace (3)—that Mael Seachlinn should give up to Brían the hostages he had taken from the south, Foreigners and men of Leinster and Connacht-men; and that he should be sole sovereign of the north without war or trespass from Brían. All this is omitted in the Ulster Annals, but their brief entry in 998 confirms it: "A hosting by Mael Seachlinn and Brían when they took the pledges of the Foreigners for their submission to the Irish." And immediately after comes a new (apparently agreed) division of the war—"A hosting by Mael Seachlinn to Connacht which he devastated. Another hosting by Brían to Leinster which he devastated."

For Brían the decisive conflict came in 999 A.D. with the revolt of Maelmordha king of Leinster in alliance with the Foreigners of Dublin. When they heard that Brían was on the march to lay siege to Dublin, they hastily sent their women and cattle to the "angle of the Foreigners," an angular piece of land near Dunlavin, an ancient fort of the kings of Leinster. At Dunlavin, one of the resting-places of Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks, the armies

of Dublin and Leinster proposed to meet and overthrow Brían. By a master-stroke he intercepted them at the narrow pass of Glen-Mama (then part of Dublin territory)—a defile where there was no room for battle and retreat was cut off (4). The terrific slaughter is remembered in local tradition, and shown in the countless bones gathered below mounds of earth and scattered under the fields. One detachment fled to the Liffey ford of the Horsepass above Poul-a-phouca, where they were utterly routed; another to the ford at Ballymore Eustace, over the quagmire at Moinavodh, where many sank in the morass; a third sought shelter in the recesses of Hollywood and Slievegad, pursued by Brían. It is probably here that one of the ancient yews round S. Kevin's church gave refuge to Maelmordha king of Leinster till he was dragged from his hiding-place in its branches by Brían's son Murchad. The Dál gCais and men of Munster were heavily slaughtered, but the Norse army was practically annihilated. To the bardic poets no battle in Ireland, not even that of Mag Rath, or of Clontarf, was equal in glory and fame to that of Glen Mama under Brían Boru.

The way was now clear to Dublin, and there at Christmas the victorious Brían made his headquarters for five weeks, seizing the enormous treasures that fed the traffic and added to the splendours of the merchants of Ath Cliath. In Leinster he took hostages, burned down fortresses, and cleared woods and passages for his army. The king of Dublin, Sitric son of Amlaibh Cuaran, fled on the day of battle to the north. Pursued by Brían's orders he found no shelter with the chiefs of Ulster, and three months later "came into Brían's house" in token of consent to the generous terms of peace—which may be gathered from the "Book of Rights": "the Norsemen of Dublin and the Foreigners of Ireland are in general bound to follow him (the king of Cashel) to battle for *maintaining them in their territory.*"

According to the later saga of the Dál gCais, "the Gaedhil and the Gaill," "Five and twenty battles Brían fought before the Foreigners were destroycd, enslaved, and bondaged. . . . So that there was not a winnowing sheet, from Benn Edair to Tech Duinn in western Erin, that had not a foreigner in bondage on it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman. So that no son of a soldier or of an officer of the Gaedhil deigned to put his hand to a flail, or any other labour on earth; nor did a woman deign to put her hands to the grinding of a quern, or to knead a cake, or to wash her clothes, but had a foreign man or a foreign woman to work for them" (5). This proud invention however was far from what we know of Brían's own policy; his determination to national peace and with it friendship even with his bitterest enemies. For seventy years attempts to drive the Foreigners out of Dublin had been abandoned. True to his fixed purpose of conciliation in Ireland, Brían restored the fortress of Ath Cliath to Sitric: a long tradition handed down probably through Giraldus to the time of Keating tells that he allowed the invaders to remain in their forts on the coast "for the purpose of attracting commerce from other countries to Ireland." Maelmordha of the yew tree was only held in captivity till Brían received the hostages of all Leinster, when he was liberated, the hostages handed over to him, and the reigning king dethroned to make way for him. The contracts were affirmed by marriages. Brían gave his daughter to the young king Sitric "of the silken beard," and probably at this time diplomatically took for himself under some form the sister of Maelmordha and mother of Sitric, Gormflaith—the famous Gormflaith who had been put away by Amlaibh Cuaran and Mael Seachlinn in succession. Finally the triumphant hosting of the Dál gCais was led back to Kincora with abundant reward of gold and silver, horns and goblets, and cloths of colour. The success of Brían's policy was shown when the Norse king of Dublin, who with the king of Leinster the year

before had been fighting against him, now supported him in his conflict with Mael Seachlinn (6).

We have seen that the danger from the sea-power of Limerick and the Danes in the west had forced Brían, for the defence of his people, to establish a centralized kingship in Cashel such as had never before been known there. He had been twenty-three years king of Cashel before he found himself driven, by the same peril of ever more invaders from over-sea, to challenge the actual system of high-kingship as an adequate protection against organized foreign menace. The formidable Dublin kingdom, attracting to itself Leinster by the profits of trade, held a position where it could break at will the power of either "Half" of Ireland. In a single central authority Brían saw the only hope of national existence. The Annals of Tigernach mention in 999 "the first revolt through treachery of Brían and the Connacht men against Mael Seachlinn the Great." It was perhaps the last day of that year that Brían for the first time entered the kingdom of Tara from the south, crossing the border of Leth Cuinn with men of the south of Connacht, of Ossory and Leinster, and the Foreigners of Dublin, to proceed to Tara. But the Foreigners with a battalion of cavalry went before them into Mag Breg, and Mael Seachlinn overtook and slaughtered them. Brían afterwards marched on till he was at Ferta neme in Mag Breg, "and he came back without a battle, without ravaging, without red fire," "through the power of the Lord," the Ulster Annals add—an instance of his constant avoidance of fighting when by any other means he could assert his authority. The definite conflict however was now opened. Again in 1000 A.D. Tigernach tells of "a great foray by the country-side (?) of Munster into the south of Meath till Oengus, son of Corrach the Valiant, with a few overtook them, and seized their spoils from them, and left them with 'a slaughter of heads.'"

As this new conflict opened Mael Seachlinn, doubtless

recalling the ancient prerogative of the kings of Connacht to hold "a border meeting at Ath Luain with the *tuatha* of Temair" (7), made with the king of Connacht a causeway there (1001) for the more easy union of their armies for war. Brían's answer to the threat was to march at the head of the forces of Leth Moga, both Foreigners and Irish, to Tara, and send ambassadors to Mael Seachlinn demanding hostages of submission or battle. Mael Seachlinn asked for a month's delay to muster the hostings of Leth Cuinn, and Brían agreed that during that time there should be no plunder or ravage or destruction or trespass or burning on his side, and for that month he remained encamped at Tara.

The "Wars of the Gaedhil and the Gaill" gives a highly dramatized account of the hurried controversies of the Uí Neill in presence of this threat. The alternate rule of the two kingly houses of Tara and Ailech, after five hundred years, was breaking down before the test of two centuries of Foreign war. We know that after Mag Rath the north-eastern sea-coast was abandoned to a half-century of raids from the Britons. Dangers foreseen by Columcille increased when all communications between the old Dál Ríata and their territory beyond the sea were broken by the pirate fleets from the Hebrides. The people of east Ulster, caught between the raiders of the Ocean and the forces of the conquering Uí Neill, fell into extreme disorder, increased by local feuds and frequent wars to assert or recover their traditional ambitions. In 913 we read of "the crews of a new fleet of the Ulidians on the coast of Saxon land where a great many were slain." Desperate raids of the pirates were desperately repulsed, as when seven score invaders were hanged on the coast of Dál Ríata in 986. On the other hand the conflict with Ailech was perpetually revived as the Uí Neill pressed on their conquests, hampered in the west by troubled relations with their kindred in Donegal, and barred in the east by the physical difficulties of Loch Neagh and its tributary rivers and

morasses. The dangers that confronted them at the time might well baffle even the extraordinary ability of the Uí Neill. Mael Seachlinn despatched a messenger to Cathal king of Connacht; and to Áed king of Ailech and to Eochaid king of east Ulster he sent Gilla Comgaill O'Slebhin the poet of the Ulidians and all the north, calling on the three kingdoms to join him in defence of Tara. The arguments are given in a long poem:

> "Let not the hill of Temair come into Brían's house.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Surrender not the soft plain to any man,
> Sweet are its drink and its meat."

And with a scoff at the little fort of Kincora:—

> "Tis a shame to have old Temair dragged to the West."

But northern kings in their hard necessity were less heedful of dangers to "the soft plain" of Tara than near dwellers in the middle land. Áed had a scornful answer: "When the Cenél nEógain," he said, "had Tara, they defended its freedom; and whoever possesses it, let him defend its freedom;" and he said "that he would not risk his life in battle against the Dál gCais, in defence of sovereignty for any other man." Upon this "final answer" Mael Seachlinn made his crowning act of submission. He "went himself to the house of Áed" and spoke to him—"Defend Tara for thyself and I will give thee hostages; for I would rather be dependent on thee than on Brían. For we have not power to prevent our falling into Brían's hands if thou come not with me at the head of the battle, and the nobles of Leth Cuinn also." An assembly or king's court of the Cenél nEógain was called. The hard common sense of the north made no allowance for sentiment. The nobles declared the offer "nothing but evasion," since the king of Ailech would not accept hostages from Mael Seachlinn, who was older and nobler than himself. Áed, himself willing to accept the sovereignty, advised them to retire

into secret council. They asked themselves what benefit would accrue to them compared with their lives should they take the lead in battle against the Dál gCais, for never could the men of either side retreat before the other, and if they joined in battle not a man would be left alive. Their arguments ended in the offer of a shrewd bargain—that "half the men of Meath and of the territory of Tara be ceded to them, as if it had been their inheritance, and that then they would fight the battle along with him."

Great wrath seized Mael Seachlinn. When he carried the tidings to the Clan Cholmáin, they in their helplessness advised him to submit to Brían as his tributary. With twelve score horsemen the high-king went to Brían's tent, legally his "house," on the green of Tara, without guarantee or protection except the honour of Brían himself and of the Dál gCais. As he was not able, he said, to give him battle, he came to make submission and to yield hostages. "Since thou hast come unto us thus," said Brían, "without guarantee, without protection, without treaty, we give thee a truce for a year, without asking pledge or hostage from thee; and we will go to visit those people (viz. Áed of Ailech and Eochaid of the Ulidians) . . . that we may know what answer they will give unto us . . . and if they will give us battle come not thou with them against us." To this Mael Seachlinn agreed, "and that advice was pleasing to all because they were at the last of their provisions."

Twelve score steeds were then given to Mael Seachlinn by Brían as a royal gift of the supreme lord. But there was not one of the twelve score men in the train of the displaced high-king who would deign in sign of submission to lead a gift-horse with him; so that Mael Seachlinn bestowed them all (in token of the new leadership of Ireland) upon Murchad son of Brían who had given his hand into his hand on that day. For he was "the only royal heir of the men of Erin who was not in alliance with Mael Seachlinn before that time. They then parted in

peace and with benedictions, and repaired to their respective homes."

With this formal and courtly procedure Brían became high-king. The year of truce was strictly observed. At its close (1002) Brían sailed to Athlone while his army went by land through Connacht, so that he received the hostages of all Connacht in one week: while Mael Seachlinn conducted his hostages to Athlone on one day. With these Brían returned to his "house." The seizure of the causeway broke all possibility of a junction of forces by Cathal and Mael Seachlinn. Dr. MacNeill points out the importance of this capture: "In 1129 while Toirdhbhealach O'Conor was seeking to establish himself as king of Ireland we find him building the first castle ever seen in Ireland at Athlone. After that date his power was no longer seriously questioned."

Meanwhile Áed king of Ailech had made a sudden hosting to Tailtiu and had "returned in peace." From Tigernach's Annals it appears that, having deserted Mael Seachlinn he had probably in this unexplained journey annexed his title of high-king—"Áed high-king of Ailech." Brían's answer was immediate. Together with Mael Seachlinn he marched to Dundalk with all the hostings south of Slíab Fúait to require hostages of the kings of Ailech and east Ulster. Áed standing at the head of the other northern kings "did not let them go past, so they separated under a truce, without hostage, without pledge." In the characteristic way of Brían "they separated in peace." But the intensity of the historic struggle in the distracted north broke out in the battle between the northern kings themselves at Craeb Tulcha (1004) in north Down, where the defeated Ulidian king with his brother and his sons were slain, and a havoc was made of the army besides between good and bad. Áed the "high-king" was himself killed. We have the lament of his court-poet:

> "Tara is deprived of her benefactor,
> A blight is upon his kindred" (8).

In the same year the king of Dál nAraide was slain by the Cenél nEógain.

The story of the Ulster Annals that Áed was slain by his own people, may show the resistance of the northern princes to any rumoured terms entered into with Brían. The traditional northern defiance of a king of Munster was so strong, that when Brían attempted in 1004 to make a royal circuit as high-king, he was prevented by the Cenél nEógain. The next year however, going by another road, he carried out his purpose to stand at the head of the army of Ireland—" the men of Erin "—in the religious capital, a site whose fame at the time is shown in a tenth-century map of the world, now in the British Museum, where it remains the only name marked in Ireland. " He was a night in Tailtiu ; and he went from that to Ard Macha, and he laid twenty ounces of gold on the altar in Ard Macha ; and he brought with him the hostages of east Ulster, and of Dál nAraide, and of all the north likewise, except the Cenél Conaill." He was there shown the " Book of Armagh," and in his presence his official historian wrote the entry still to be seen on the page : " Ego Calvus Perennis haec scripsi in conspectu Briani, imperatoris Scottorum." * " I Mael Suthain write this in the presence of Brían, Emperor of the Irish."

The date of these words is significant. From the sixth century to the eleventh or twelfth, as Dr. MacNeill has put it, the dominant idea of Irishmen was, that as in Ireland there were many small states, and over them all in primacy rather than in operative authority, there was a chief king, the monarch of Ireland ; so in the world there were many kingdoms and over all these a chief king, whom

* " *Calvus* is the literal translation of ' Mael,' bald. *Perennis* is in Irish ' Suthain,' lasting. The Ulster Annals tell that in 1010 ' Mael Suthain chief sage of Ireland and king of the Eóganachta of lough Lein fell asleep in Christ.' " (E. MacNeill.)

Irish writers called "the king of the world." The theory of the supreme lord, the bond of all human societies and international law, was adopted from Latin historians, especially from S. Jerome and Orosius. In the earliest Irish histories the emperor reigning at Constantinople was the undoubted head of Christian Europe, as we may see by a metrical list of the "kings of the world" from the Flood down to the eighth century which was written out by Flann of Monasterboice who died in 1056. But after 800 A.D. a wholly new problem had arisen. The Empire of Charles the Great was held to be a continuation of the Roman Empire to which all European countries were nominally subject. There was therefore no longer one "king of the world," but two. The immediate issue was obscured by the general explanation that the change was a mere translation, legally effected, of the Empire from the Eastern Rome back to the West. It is probable that this was accepted in Ireland, and it is even likely that Irish kings sent tribute to the emperor at Aachen, friend and patron of their civilization (9).

But in Brían's time there had been a new revolution. As the Muhammedans broke the Eastern empire in the Mediterranean, so the Scandinavian fleets threatened the new empire of the West. Europe was a tumultuous scene of change from the old to the modern world, the vitality of its new races driving them to form national states. Imperial territories were disputed among warring heirs, partitioned, attacked at every point, till the enfeebled Carolingian line was extinguished in 911.

Brían was already twenty years old when the German king Otto the Great (961) "renewed the Imperial Office," and founded the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," which was in name to last till 1806. It was an empire greatly changed since the day when the Ulster Annals recorded that "Charles king of the Franks, or rather Emperor of all Europe, slept in peace" (813). France and Burgundy and Spain were not included under its power. The new German Empire was stripped of

authority along the whole Atlantic sea-board from the Shetlands to the Mediterranean, and across the northern seas. As the tradition of Imperial unity perished the new nations asserted their independence, and not least the Scandinavian kingdoms, now by peremptory order proclaimed Christian, emerging from their confused and tempestuous histories into the full energy and pride of powerful states. Already Athelstan king of England had in his vanity and affectation given himself ever varying titles, which culminated (934) in that of "Basileus of the English, and at the same time Emperor of the kings and nations dwelling within the bounds of Britain."

Thus the old doctrine of Imperial Rome had been once again shaken and confused. Two Emperors still ruled; but now in the west the ancient borders of empire were themselves annihilated. The Byzantine rulers renewed their strength, till the emperor Basil II (976–1025) brought the power of the Eastern Empire to its highest point. In the West the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, crowned in a restored Aachen, recalled the fame of Charles the Great; and Otto III (996–1002) aspired to make Rome the seat of government and residence of the Empire of the West. The death of Otto and the extinction of his dream of Rome must have carried to Brían, who was evidently in the closest contact through his learned men with European events, a sense of profound change. In 1000 A.D., as king of Cashel, he still admitted the homage due to "the king of the world." But in 1005 he seems to have recognized the fading away of an Imperial West, and to have accepted a more modern aim—to establish the sovereign independence of his country. As Basil was supreme temporal ruler in the East, and Henry of Bavaria the new Emperor in some remnant lands of the mutilated West, so was Brían in his own land, for which the sole leadership and responsibility now rested with him, the *Imperator Scottorum*. We may remember the importance of a claim which might stretch across the water to the Scots of the Irish

Dál Ríata, the barrier that now alone held firm, right across the great northern territories of the Scandinavians.

Life moved in those days with slow and arduous effort. It was after thirty or more years of war that Charles the Great was crowned Emperor when he was near sixty years old. Brían after from twenty to thirty years fighting was high-king of Ireland at sixty-one and wrote himself down Imperator at sixty-three. After his stately revolution—a singular movement unstained by blood, where there was no victim, no prisoner, no outlaw, no final severance between the two combatants who acted together for years to come—there is no hint that Brían ever transgressed in any event whatever the traditional limits of the high-king's rights. From his first journey to Armagh, when he proclaimed the peace of Erin, both of churches and people (10), he made year after year his formal circuit of the north to receive the due legal hostages and pledges. If he was opposed in force he retired without battle, until his authority was so clear that pledges were yielded to him in peace. In 1007, apparently starting from Kincora, he went through the modern Sligo and by Assaroe into Tír Conaill, Tír Eógain, Dál Ríata and Dál nAraide, and according to law took hostages of the peoples of Erin until at Lammas he halted at Belach Duin in Meath (now Castlekieran). There he granted "the full demand of Patrick's congregation;" and dismissed his army to their homes in all directions, the national army as he understood it, "the men of Erin both Irish and Foreigners." The next year (1008) he again made his hosting to Dundroma "by the side of Ard Macha," and in exercise of the justice of the high-king brought away the abbot of Moville who had been taken hostage by the Cenél nEógain. Mael Seachlinn, whether in his new security or perhaps in emulation, renewed the Fair of Tailtiu, and in a great assembly established an abbot of the Columban *familia*, as of right a descendant of the Cenél Conaill. There was another

hosting by Brían to Slíab Fúait in 1010 to receive the hostages of Leth Cuinn. In 1011 hostings from every province of Ireland were led by his son Murchad and the king of Ailech against the Cenél Conaill, and a hosting by Brían himself brought back the king in submission to Kincora. In this manifestation Mael Seachlinn and Brían were together in camp at Enach-duibh in Cavan or Leitrim.

In Irish tradition, from his first royal circuit round Leth Cuinn, Brían "continued prosperous and venerated, giving banquets, hospitable, just-judging, ruling with devotion and law, with prowess and valour" (11). The only death laid to his charge in the Ulster Annals was a Connacht chieftain "treacherously slain" by him in 1007. The chief's land lay across the road north to Athlone, a much-debated highway, and according to Tigernach and the Four Masters he was "slain by Murchad son of Brían," probably in battle. The Norse saga of "Burnt Njal" adds a noble tribute to the patient justice of the Irish high-king. "King Brían thrice forgave all his outlaws the same fault, but if they misbehaved themselves oftener, then he let them be judged by the law; and from this one may mark what a king he must have been" (12).

To the Norse indeed Brían remained "the best-natured of kings." In spite of wars, natural friendships had grown up between the settled Foreigners and the kings of the Dál gCais, whose chief poets long served as a link of intercourse between the Irish and the merchant citizens. The "blind poet" of Mahoun had been an intimate at the court of Ivar in Limerick, and in his elegy on the murdered king he refused to "revile the Foreigners because of my friendship with Dubhgeen," the son of Ivar (13). There was rivalry in Dublin between Norse and Irish poets, both welcomed with praise and gifts. (14). A story tells that the men of Dublin, having ordered a great Irish poem, refused to pay the price asked. The poet retorted with a quatrain :

"To refuse me,
If anyone so wishes let him do it!
And after that I will carry off
The honour of the man that has done so."

Upon this his own award was given him, and this is the award he made: a penny from every bad Viking, and two pence from every good Viking, so that there was not found among them a Viking who did not give them two pence, for none of them thought it right that he should be called a bad Viking. Then the Vikings told him to praise the sea, that they might know whether he possessed original poetry. Thereupon he praised the sea, he being drunk, and he said: "A great tempest on the plain of Ler"—a poem which has come down to us in a single copy (15). For the greater honour of Dublin, the fable was invented that the poet was no less than the celebrated Ruman mac Colmáin—called in the "Book of Leinster" the Homer and Virgil of Ireland—who had died in 784. His oratory had been Cell Belaig on lands belonging to Mochuta: "and Ruman gave one third of his wealth to it, and one third to the school, and one third he took with him to Rathen (Ráhen near Tullamore), where he died and was buried in one grave with Hua Suanaig, on account of his great honour with God and men."

The Irish poets seem to have acted as ambassadors charged with communications between the states, whether trading or political—such as Mael Seachlinn's poet and historian Mac Coisse, or Mac Liag the chief poet of Brían, who stayed at the court of Sitric king of Dublin for a year in much content (16). From first to last the literary culture and enthusiasm of Irish scholars served as a powerful influence in winning strangers into the commonwealth of the peoples of Ireland.

Brían's poets and historians were as deeply charged as any modern publicists with the business of inducing the public to accept changing doctrines of a world in movement. There was doubtless a scattered propaganda by professors outside the official groups, if we judge by a

stray fragment in which an old pretendant to high-kingship from the south is applauded: "The powerful shining blessing of Patrick which he had given to the noble Oengus had descended to the renowned Cathal—a strong and mighty king who overthrew peoples" (17). But the great source of authority was now, as in Cormac's time, the "Book of Rights"—a Book amended to suit the conditions of a new age. Its old form was preserved, but new prose comments were added for instruction, new poems embodied the latest decrees, and a new order was declared under the high sanction of S. Patrick. Cúan O'Lothcáin, known in the Annals of Clonmacnois as "the prince poet of Ireland, a great chronicler, and one to whom for his sufficiency the causes of Ireland were committed to be examined and ordered" (18)—chief poet of Mael Seachlinn till 1002, and after that again from Brían's death till 1022—opened the work with a tract on the "prohibitions," or unlucky acts according to old pagan traditions of the kings of each division of Ireland. The record of Munster was practically re-written (19). It declared the king of Cashel head over all by the blessing of the altar of Patrick. It asserted that the sovereignty of Tara had passed away at the fasting of the saints against its kings, when they foretold that the race of Niall should have no "house" there, and that the new house should be raised by the race of Ailill Olom. Against Tara the blessing of Patrick had come to the king of "round Cashel." A right was claimed for the king to be escorted by his sub-kings in a circuit of the whole island, though in fact it had never been customary for any but the high-king of Tara to make an official circuit and take pledges of the provincial kings. In the new theory of history, when the king of Cashel was not king of Éire, the government of Half of Éire was due to him from the "House of Donn" (the islands in the bay of Kenmare where Donn son of Milesius was drowned) to Ath Cliath of Leinster. Ossory, Leinster, and the Foreigners were all alike under his command, bound to tribute and to follow him in

every battle. He could claim border tribute from Connacht for maintaining them in their "great Half." In short the *comarb* or heir of Cashel was general head of all, inasmuch as the *comarb* of Patrick, the king of Cashel, was head over all by the blessing of God and of the altar of Patrick—Lord of the whole territory of Ireland :

> "Cashel overheadeth every head
> Except Patrick and the King of the Stars,
> The high-king of the world and the Son of God,
> To these alone is due its homage."

The nationalization of Dublin, as we may justly say, was one of the unremitting cares of Brían. The "Book of Rights" has its legend for the Foreigners of a smooth and pleasant history—how Patrick himself had come even from Tara to visit a fabled king in Dublin, and having subdued his pagan heart by raising his son to life, had won from him a willing tribute for Armagh equal to what the Gaedhil had once demanded from the Gaill, even to the tax of an ounce for every nose—a tribute in the court of the Gaill, a gift of good kings, of soldiers, of veneration in its churches, of habitation and commerce. "This is the history of Ath Cliath; in books to the day of judgment it shall be."

But the most remarkable fact in Brían's kingship, and the hardest to be understood by rulers and historians acquainted only with the royal law of conquering kings in other countries, was his reverence for the ancient customs by which his nation had lived—a reverence no less profound than that of the people themselves. His understanding of the problem is shown by his remaining all through the height of his power at his own old hereditary fort. He inflamed no smouldering passions and strifes with late enemies by planting himself in Cashel as king of Munster. Yet more remarkable, as high-king he never made any attempt, amid all his hostings over the country, to set up his seat of power at "Cormac's Hill." In his

revised "Book of Rights," claiming that the blessing of Patrick with all its authority had passed from Tara to Cashel, a prophecy was added that the sovereignty of Erin, "though great the reproach to Inis Fail," should not be restored to Tara until the high-king's house was erected there by the race of Ailill Olom. But the court-poet and historian admitted that the men of Leinster did not teach this "good history," nor did Leth Cuinn preserve it (20). With Brían's ceaseless care not to provoke conflict, or weaken Irish faith in national tradition, he never sought to fulfil the prophecy. From his Kincora home he raised no challenge to Mael Seachlinn's poet-ambassador's cry that "old Temair" should not "be dragged to the West."

In his policy we see that deeper realism which soberly measured the respective values to a nation of old tradition and gradual consent, as against the parade of outward symbols of authority over an angered people. What he actually did was without any controversy to leave Meath and Tara to Mael Seachlinn, and there was no flouting of popular feeling. We have seen the national danger from Leinster, hostile alike to Cashel and to Tara, and by long habit and interest immersed in the most perilous foreign intrigue. To meet this he had used every form of conciliation, and if he had asked, had never imposed a tribute. Foreign founders of Dublin bent on military dominion had rightly seen in the plain of Breg the vulnerable point of the island, easy of access for invaders, and opening a ready way to every part of the island, even into Ulster by the main eastern road flanking the sea. Brían's object was to win them into the Irish commonwealth, by whose forces they should be maintained in their territory, and whose interests should be theirs. The slow task he had in view was that of ending divisions and uniting the whole peoples of Ireland in a common peace.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XX.

(1) P. 377. Four Masters, II, p. 713.
(2) P. 378. MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 24.
(3) P. 380. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 109, pp. cxli–cxliii.
(4) P. 381. *Ib.*, p. cxliv. *n.*
(5) P. 382. *Ib.*, p. 117.
(6) P. 383. MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," p. 76.
(7) P. 384. "Book of Rights," p. 5.
(8) P. 387. Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," p. 75. A poet of about 1000 A.D. rehearses the praises of Aed king of the Cenél nEógain—how his race had founded Tara—how they protected the poets when it was proposed to turn them out of Ireland—how from Scotland to Bere island there was not a poet who did not come to Áed's royal hill, unless some ignorant bungler—how he had smitten the Uí Echaid and given their bodies to the ravens.
(9) P. 389. See Robin Flower in *Athenaeum*, Sept. 5th, 1919.
(10) P. 391. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 137.
(11) P. 392. *Ib.*, p. 141.
(12) P. 392. "Njal Saga," II, p. 324.
(13) P. 392. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 99.
(14) P. 392. A. Walsh: "Scandinavian Relations with Ireland, p. 71.
(15) P. 393. See Kuno Meyer: "Ancient Irish Poetry," 51, 112; and "Otia Merseiana," II, 77, 80.
(16) P. 393. Walsh: "Scandinavian Relations with Ireland," p. 70. See O'Curry, II, 128.
(17) P. 394. Kuno Meyer: "Bruchstücke," 7.
(18) P. 394. Annals of Clonmacnois, p. 174.
(19) P. 394. MacNeill: "Celtic Ireland," pp. 73 *seq.*; "Book of Rights," pp. 55, 57, 51.
(20) P. 396. "Book of Rights," p. 57.

CHAPTER XXI

CLONTARF

There was little time for Brían, whether by his zeal for learning or his efforts for conciliation, to ensure peace. Trouble was always threatening on the border. In 1009 Mael Seachlinn made "a great retaliatory depredation on the men of Leinster." Outer discontents penetrated into Brían's house at Kincora. Maelmordha, the refugee in the yew tree at Glen Mama, who had been given by Brían the kingship of Leinster, arrived at Kincora conveying three "sail-trees of pine" from Fidh Gaibhle (the wood now called Figile in the upper watershed of the Barrow near Portarlington), probably tribute due from one of the disputed border frontiers. He came in due state wearing the silken tunic bordered with gold and adorned with silver buttons given him by Brían as his token of lordship. Crossing a mountain he put his hand to steady a mast, and one of his buttons broke. The tunic was carried at Kincora to his sister Gormflaith to have a new button. Gormflaith, already repudiated by Amlaibh Cuaran and by Mael Seachlinn, and doubtless now foreseeing or preparing for a new adventure or "leap," cast the tunic in the fire and bitterly reproached her brother, a king of Leinster, for yielding service to the king of Munster. There was another quarrel the next morning over a game of chess, when Maelmordha was "teaching" the adversary of Murchad son of Brían. He advised a move by which the game went against Murchad. In his anger Murchad broke into a bitter taunt about Glen Mama. "It was thou that gavest advice to the Foreigners when they were defeated."

"I will give them advice again, and they shall not be defeated," retorted Maelmordha. "Have the yew-tree made ready for yourself by then," said Murchad. Maelmordha in fury left the house without taking leave. Word was carried to Brían who hastily sent a messenger to "detain him until Brían should converse with him, and until he should carry away with him cattle and pay." The messenger overtook Maelmordha as he was mounting his horse at the east end of the plank-bridge of Killaloe, who turned on the officer and gave him a stroke of a yew horse-switch on his head and broke all the bones of the head. Some were anxious to pursue the king of Leinster and not let him escape without submission. But Brían in his chivalrous fashion answered that "it should be at the threshold of his own house he would demand justice of him, and that he would not prove treacherous to him in his own house" (1).

On his journey home Maelmordha called an assembly of all the nobles of Leinster at the house of Dúnlaing king of Iarthar Liffey, west of the river, "and he told them that he had received dishonour, and that reproachful words were applied to himself and to all the province." Leinster had been denationalized by its disastrous history—its age-long fight for independence against Cashel on one side and Tara on the other, its critical position between the foreign armies of Dublin and of Waterford. It had never yielded more than a forced and unwilling submission to Brían. The Leinster men, allied with Dublin merchants through common trading interests, and with bitter memories of centuries-old border feuds, seized on the chance of revolt, and by their insurrection led directly to the battle of Clontarf. Their decision was "to turn against Brían." Maelmordha no doubt reckoned on vengeance also over his second foe Mael Seachlinn, heir of the ancient claims of the Uí Neill to tribute from his territory. By alliance with the Foreigners, he would thus be delivered from all threats of North or South. In his mad and narrow policy he sent

messengers to Flaithbertach king of Ailech, son of the great Muirchertach Uí Neill, exhorting him to make war on the Ulaid of east Ulster and on Mael Seachlinn.

The victory at Craeb Tulcha had given the Cenél nEógain nominal rule over all Ulster: Flaithbertach king of Ailech—head of the northern line which until Brían's high-kingship had held the alternate succession with the southern Uí Neill—watched his opportunity to recover the leading position abandoned by Áed in 1004. Other messengers were hurried to the kings of Bréifne on the Connacht border, and of Cairbre in north Kildare, inciting them to raise trouble against Brían and Mael Seachlinn in their several districts. There was a flare of desultory disorders and discontents in 1012 and 1013. Flaithbertach king of Ailech was still fighting to subdue, now the Cenél Conaill, now the Ulidians. Mael Seachlinn invaded Tír Eógain, burned Tullyhog and "took a spoil." Flaithbertach plundered the Ards in Down and brought off the greatest spoils a king had ever borne: and presently made a hosting to Kells, where "Mael Seachlinn abandoned the hill to him." There was a wild raid in Meath by the king of Cairbre, "but a few good men of Mael Seachlinn's household, who were after drinking then and were intoxicated, met them and gave them battle through pride"—a fact so remarkable as to deserve chronicling. Mael Seachlinn overtook them and "they left their preys with them," and the dead body of the invading king. The king of south Breg, who made a barbarous outrage on the Foreigners, yoking two to the plough, and dragging two others as a harrow, seems to have been carried as a prisoner to Mael Seachlinn, and "died in his sleep after drinking" (2).

In this lawless strife Brían took no military part. He made in 1012 what was apparently a peaceful hosting to Muirthemne (Louth) on the Ulster border, possibly to enlist the mediation of Armagh, "and he gave full freedom to Patrick's churches on that occasion" (3).

The next year (1013) his ally Mael Seachlinn led a predatory expedition over the same district, by advice of the abbot of Armagh and Brían, to punish the profanation of S. Patrick's "silver-sounding" bell. Brían evidently depended on the traditional law to abate these disorders, and left Mael Seachlinn full freedom to maintain his hereditary government against lawless violence from kings of Cairbre or of Leinster. The real danger which Brían feared was not from within but from without —the menace of Foreign invasion in the bay of Dublin, and the effect of such an incursion on the men of Leinster.

A vivid warning was given to Ireland when in July 1013 a mighty fleet of the Dubh-Gaill with king Swein of Denmark at their head landed in the Humber to complete the subjection of England. With terror men saw the size and number of his ships, the splendour of their equipment, the towers on their forecastles, the lions, eagles, and dragons of gold and silver glittering on their top-masts, their brazen beaks, and keels decked with colours. In a few months, before Swein's death in the spring of 1014, England was in fact conquered, and Cnut chosen king by the Danish host, and before long his place secured as English monarch: "of all kings that have spoken the Danish tongue," said the saga, "he was mightiest, and the one that reigned over the greatest kingdoms."

Brían did not witness the end of this drama. But he well knew the threatening peril of the Lochlannaig, with their headquarters on the Orkneys, and their ready mercenaries in the wandering fleets of traders, buccaneers, rovers for adventure. He saw Ireland ringed round by Scandinavians at the height of their power, whose command of the sea left her without hope of aid outside her own shores. Sweden and Denmark had established their borders and dominion. Norway, threatened by both and by Norse rebels, had still to secure her independent position, and to her the importance of the Irish harbours steadily increased. However pacific Brían

was in home affairs, and with foreign merchants settled in Ireland as part of the civil community, he never lost sight of danger from abroad. In the summer of 1013 he gathered his whole forces for the impending struggle. His son Murchad with half the army was sent through Leinster, devastating the territory from Glendalough till " he came to Kilmainham, to the green of Ath Cliath." There Brían joined him, having marched through Ossory. Maelmordha had fled with his three battalions into the fortress : and Brían with his son made an encampment for the siege. They were at a disadvantage, for the Norse troops were powerfully reinforced by all the battalions of Leinster, and Dublin fed from the sea could not be starved out. The land army blockaded the town from harvest to Christmas ; " and neither the Foreigners nor the Leinstermen yielded him during that time one hostage, nor one battle, nor one subsidy. So when their provisions were exhausted Brían retired to his home " (4).

Behind this account we may perhaps see how Brían's policy was carried out in this long passive and bloodless conflict. The Leinster rising was checked. No war was made on Dublin merchants. In the extreme peril of his people, not a man was wasted, nor a channel of conciliation blocked. Lack of provisions was certainly not the reason, if it was the excuse, for his retreat. According to the Annals, it was in this year that he made numerous fortifications about the Shannon, at Kincora and round Limerick, apparently against attacks from the sea. He had evidently exact information, while the Irish army was blockading Dublin, of every device the Foreigners were using on their free road of the ocean to organize the full naval force required for conquest of Ireland to the Norse dominions by a final victory in the spring. Gormflaith, said the Norse saga, was ever urging on her son Sitric to kill Brían, and now (apparently convinced that there was no hope in intrigues at home) sent him across sea to seek Foreign help.

The first aim was to win Sigurd, powerful earl of the

Orkneys, whose mother was Irish, daughter of Cearbhall prince of Ossory and later king of Dublin. Sitric "of the silken beard," called by the Norse "king of Ireland," went visiting earl Sigurd before Yule, and there too went earl Gilli of the Hebrides. On Yule day he sat with Sigurd in the hall of his homestead in the Orkneys, and "stirred in his business with earl Sigurd, and bade him to go to the war with him against king Brían." The earl "was long steadfast, but the end of it was that he let the king have his way, but said he must have his mother's hand for his help, and be king in Ireland if they slew Brían. . . . Earl Sigurd gave his word to go; but king Sitric promised him his mother and the kingdom. It was so settled that earl Sigurd was to come with all his host to Dublin by Palm Sunday" (5). Gormflaith showed herself well pleased with the bargain for her vengeance on Brían. "So grim was she after their parting," according to the saga, "that she would gladly have had him dead." She demanded the gathering of yet greater forces, and told of two vikings with thirty ships lying off the isle of Man—"men of such hardihood that nothing can withstand them. The one's name is Ospak, and the other's Brodir. Thou shalt fare to find them, and spare nothing to get them into thy quarrel, whatever price they ask." Ospak, leader of ten ships, "was a heathen, and the wisest of all men." Brodir (whose name has been lost so that he is only known as "brother" of Ospak) had been a Christian and mass-deacon, but had become "God's dastard," now worshipped heathen fiends, and was mightily skilled in sorcery. Tall and strong he was, with black hair so long that he tucked it under his belt; and he was lord of twenty ships. Sitric himself went to negotiate with the vikings. Brodir refused to help in the war without a promise that the kingdom of Ireland should be his, and Gormflaith his queen, to which Sitric consented, and reported to his mother how things stood. It was agreed to keep the secret so that Sigurd should know nothing about it. Thus

Brodir too was to come to Dublin on Palm Sunday. Ospak refused his consent. He would " not fight against so good a king " (6). Avoiding a treacherous attempt of his " brother " to entrap him and his ships, he escaped to Brían, told him all that he had learned, and vowed to take the true faith and follow him till his death-day. Envoys were sent also to hire chiefs of ships and outlaws and pirates—two thousand of them—selling themselves for gold and silver and other treasure as well. Adventurers in plenty were to be found, men from York, Wales, and Galloway, Danes, Britons, Flemings, Normans, merchants from France and from the Saxons, " two sons of the king of France " (7). With the highly disciplined and splendidly armoured Norse of the islands under Sigurd as a nucleus they made a formidable host. The importance of the preparations, as well as all Norse and Irish traditions, show that " Brían's Battle " was on both sides known to be a contest for the sovereignty of Ireland—whether a Norse king or an Irish king should reign there.

Brían, with his widespread sources of information of the enemies' preparations, had gathered his own troops to begin their march to Ath Cliath on S. Patrick's Day. The Dál gCais, all the hostings of Munster to its western-most limits, and " the ten great stewards of Brían with foreign auxiliaries " were commanded by his son Murchad, " the yew of Ross " (one of the famous old trees), " for the historians . . . do not relate that there was any man of the sons of Adam in his time who could hold a shield " against him; and his son Tordelbach, the best crown prince of his time. The hostings of Munster came from its extremest borders—the chief leader among them Brían's faithful friend Cian son of Maelmuadh, and under him Cathal son of Donnabhan. Some chiefs of Connacht were with Brían—the Uí Maine, the Aidne, and warriors of the Delbna-mór, old allies that had fought for him at Sulcoit in 967, and sent men to give their lives for him at Clontarf. From the north

the kings of Bréifne, and of Conmaicni (the regions of Leitrim and Longford) joined him, bringing news that the king of Cairbre south of Loch Erne refused to come. The *Leabhar Oiris*, traditionally ascribed to Brían's chronicler Mac Liag, notes the saying of O'Carroll of Oriel and Maguire of Fermanagh, " As we are from the farthest north part of Ireland, let us join the battalion of Cian MacMaelmuadh as he is from the extreme south of Ireland." The Mor-maor of Mar, chieftain of the Eóganachta in Scotland and high steward of Mar, in remembrance of his descent from the house of Corc and Cian, came to help Brían to defend Erin against the mail-clad Foreigners. The power of Armagh was on his side. Mael Seachlinn joined him with his army of the middle kingdom. Only the Uí Neill of the north held aloof—in their own distractions fighting neither for nor against the Foreigners. In this gathering of so great a part of Ireland after ten years of government, without any form of conquest, or a dominant army, not even a capital held in subjection, we may judge of the force of Brían's character, and purpose to unite Irishmen in the national cause.

In the week before Palm Sunday the hostile fleet was assembled in Dublin bay. The Irish army in great array under seventy banners met between Grangegorman and Glasnevin, north of the Liffey. Still the fight was delayed from day to day. Norse sagas show how grave the issue was for Sigurd. The sky was full of portents. Showers of blood, axes and spears battling in the air, flights of savage ravens, and every night one dead in every ship. There were rumours that some of the ships proposed to withdraw and sail back. Brodir himself felt the terror and had recourse to his sorceries. Through them he learned that if the battle were on Good Friday Brían would fall but win the victory, but if they fought before that day his enemies would perish. He ordered that there should be no fight before Friday. On Thursday there was a new portent when a man on an apple-grey

horse, and in his hand he held a halberd—Odin it was rumoured—rode up to Gormflaith and her company and talked long with them. Others report him an Irish traitor. There were legendary portents also for Irish warriors. A youth from the land of faëry appeared to Murchad, to tell him that he would receive certain death if he fought, and of what the faëry world could give "if thou didst but know it," "life without death, without cold, without thirst, without hunger, without decay, beyond any delight of the delights of the earth to me." "This is not good encouragement to fight," said Murchad ". . . but, however, often was I offered in hills and in faëry mansions this world and these gifts; but I never abandoned for one night my country nor my inheritance for them" (8).

On the morning of Good Friday, April 23rd, 1014, the day fixed by Brodir's sorceries, the host of Ath Cliath "fared out of the Burg" and put themselves in battle array. The accounts that have come down to us in old sagas are confused and conflicting. All alike are mixed with legendary details. Neither Norsemen nor Munstermen knew the topography of the Dublin region so as to give an exact description. Still more perplexing was the bitter partizanship of writers who for their propaganda boldly chose what they would report, what they would omit, and what they would alter to suit their own purposes. The latest and most valuable effort of reconstruction is that of Mr. Lloyd in the *New Ireland Review*, Vol. XXVIII., where he gives in detail his reasons for placing for the first time the fighting columns in their due positions, with the resulting course of the battle.

The site of the conflict was a very limited space between the Liffey and the Tolka; bounded on the north by Tomar's Wood, remnant of an ancient forest with thick undergrowth and majestic oaks, and on the south by the strand, whatever may have been its limits in those days at high tide. The only entry from the south to the "Green of Dublin" and the wide open country

which then stretched from what is now the Phœnix Park to the Weir of Clontarf was across the Liffey by Dubhgall's Bridge, just above the modern Four Courts.

The battalions of the Norse and the Leinstermen seem to have been stationed in a line that bent round slightly from Dubhgall's Bridge to the Weir. The Dublin Norse had their post next to the Bridge. The men of Leinster were ranged in three strong companies—the hostings of Maelmordha, of the Uí Cennselach, and the muster of the lesser kingdoms—probably on Crinan's Hill, the rising ground between the modern Rutland Square and Mountjoy Square. The Foreign vikings under Sigurd held the ground thence to the Weir. The Irish army, leaving a broad space between, planted their three hosts in like manner from river to river: the Connacht and western men facing the Dublin Norse, the men of Munster opposite the Leinster hosting, and the men of Dál gCais over against the most formidable foes, Sigurd and his troops, a thousand of his choice warriors in mailed armour, corslets of double refined iron or of brass. Mael Seachlinn's army seems to have lain between Grangegorman and Magh Duma, now Phibsborough, to be thrown in when it was needed to strengthen the troops of the south or west. It is reported that Mael Seachlinn "placed a ditch between himself and the Foreigners"—in other words he probably fortified his position with earthworks, which Mr. Lloyd thinks may still have existed in 1324 in "le Rughdich" that extended from Grangegorman as far as the king's highway leading from Finglas to the city. The Norse fleet was far off at Clontarf—the Bull—for fear of being stranded by the falling tide.

The Norse for their own reasons forced the battle on Good Friday. Brían refused to fight on that holy day, and gave the command of his troops to Murchad, with his son of fifteen Tordelbach. In a space behind the fighting line of the Dál gCais a skin was laid on the ground, where the high-king knelt and clasped his hands to pray.

A single lad attendant—Laitean—was with him, and a few warriors holding their shields linked made round him a "shield-burg." Behind him was "Tomar's Wood," the sacred wood of the Dublin Foreigners where they worshipped their god Thor. Through it the stream of the Tolka flowed from Glasnevin where Columcille had studied under the Leper three hundred and fifty years before. "Watch thou the battle," said Brían to the lad, "while I sing the psalms."

The combat was opened by the chief champion of the Foreigners, Plait, "a strong knight of Lochlann," "brave champion of the Foreigners," coming forth from Sigurd's host with a threefold cry, "Faras Domnall!" Domnall, the high steward of Mar from Alba, "answered and said, Here, thou reptile!" The two warriors fell dead together, "the sword of each through the heart of the other, and the hair of each in the clenched hand of the other."

With equal desperation the forces fought on that narrow, perilous, and ill-chosen ground, marked out by the foreign host. The Norse trusted to their mighty ships for refuge or for provisions. They had their heavy armour, well-fastened coats of mail of double refined iron or of brass, their "foreign helmets" with clasps and buckles, powerful swords, broad green spears, and arrows—all their weapons, in common belief, poisoned in the blood of dragons and toads and water-snakes of hell and scorpions and such like. On the other side were "the wolf-dogs of victorious Banba," with spears well-riveted in handles of white hazel, hard straight swords, poisoned darts with silken strings and thick-set with nails, in the hands of their chiefs and heroes Lochlann axes for cutting the enemies' coats of mail, shields with bosses of brass and chains of bronze, "golden helmets" set with gems or ornament; and to guard their bodies graceful shirts and many-coloured enfolding tunics over comfortable long vests.

The details of the battle do not concern us here. They

can be studied in Mr. Lloyd's careful reconstruction of the scene. He has ably refuted the calumny which has so long prevailed that "the men of Meath and Mael Seachlinn were not of the same mind as the rest," that Mael Seachlinn was in "evil understanding" with the enemy to betray Brían, and that the earthworks he had thrown up for protection were made on advice of the Foreigners, and part of a compact that neither side should attack the other. For this fable there is no ground in any action of Mael Seachlinn during the whole of his long and loyal association with Brían, or in the events of the battle. His entrenched position was the act of an experienced warrior; and it appears in fact that when the Munster troops were hard pressed by Maelmordha, Mael Seachlinn hastened to their aid and routed the Leinster battalions. In that centre of the battlefield, about the slope of Crinan's Hill, the fight was fierce. According to Mael Seachlinn's reported story of that day: "I never saw a battle like it, nor have I heard of its equal. . . . There was a field and a ditch between us and them, and the sharp wind of the spring coming over them towards us," so that in a brief time no son or brother could recognize the man next him, "we were so covered, as well our heads as our faces, and our clothes, with the drops of gory blood, carried by the force of the sharp cold wind which passed over them to us." . . . "Our spears over our heads had become clogged and bound with long locks of hair, which the wind forced upon us."

The conflict with the Norse troops, who fell on the Dalcassians with "crushing and repulse," had its peculiar terrors unknown to Irish war. We should probably see something more than a merely bombastic description of the first conflict with a mailed host in that narrow field, which opened to the Irish a new vision of war—comparable to the shock of the first use of gunpowder against them in the sixteenth century (when, curiously enough, the terrifying effect of mere sound is given), or to our own modern experience of military methods outside

of all former record (9). It was a new scene the writers described, "like the terrific judgment day to crush and shiver the compact world"—the clashing steel hacking and cutting helmets and corslets of iron and brass, the "showers of sparks," "flaming stars from the firmament," "flashes of fire in the expanse of the air." "And it appeared to the people of Ath Cliath, who were watching them from their battlements, that not more numerous would be the sheaves waving over a great company reaping a field of oats, even though two or three battalions were working at it, than the hair flying with the wind from them, cut away by heavy gleaming axes, and by bright flaming swords." Before the first onrush of the mailed Norsemen the Dál gCais were forced back, till Murchad, son of Brían, at the head of the seven score sons of kings that were in his household, swinging a sword in either hand, "made a hero's breach and a soldier's field" through the battalions of the enemy. From his watch-tower on the battlements of Ath Cliath king Sitric and his wife, daughter of Brían, watched through the day. "Well do the Foreigners reap the field," said he; "many is the sheaf they let go from them." "It will be at the end of the day that will be seen," said Brían's daughter.

Meanwhile the high spring tide which had carried the ships up the Liffey at 6 a.m. and fallen back, was now again rushing inward and cutting off from the Norse access to the ships, their only refuge. The last tragedy was added to the appalling strife of armies imprisoned within a restricted and ever-narrowing space, as all way of flight by the strand was closed. The panic-stricken Foreigners and the Leinstermen, seeing no escape by Dubhgall's Bridge, and cut off on the north by Tomar's Wood, were driven backwards to the Tolka Weir and the incoming sea, where there was no place of landing for the ships. In the wild pursuit the boy Tordelbach "went after the foreigners into the sea, when the rushing tide-wave struck him a blow against the weir of Clontarf and so was he

drowned," entangled in a group of his enemies. It was said that of the men of Connacht and the west, hemmed in against the Liffey under the Castle battlements, only a hundred escaped. The fate of the Dublin Norsemen opposite to the Connacht troops was worse, for only twenty fled from the battle, and the last of these was slain at Dubhgall's Bridge.

Some Foreigners were still left, "who retained their senses and their memories, and who preferred enduring any amount of suffering rather than be drowned." Among them was Sigurd in the madness of the Berserker rage, whom no edged weapon could harm, nor strength overcome. He seems to have turned westward towards the open land of Magh Duma and of what is now Phœnix Park. Murchad in pursuit reached his adversary. One account tells that with a violent rush he cut the fastenings of Sigurd's helmet and felled him to the earth. Turning on the son of the king of Lochlann, head of the Foreigners, Murchad fought till the two fell there together. On the field of battle lay the dead of Brían's house—on the west his son Murchad, victor of the day over Sigurd and his host—on the east his grandson Tordelbach, in the last pursuit of the Foreigners into the ocean—and Conaing his nephew, said by one to have been the slayer of Maelmordha in the middle field, by another to have been killed at the close of the fight by the side of Brían.

The two royal watchers of the morning were still at gaze under the sinking sun. King Sitric and his wife, Brían's daughter, had not left their watch-tower of Ath Cliath. "It appears to me," said she, "that the Foreigners have gained their inheritance." "'What meanest thou, O woman?' said Amlaibh's son. 'The Foreigners are going into the sea, their natural inheritance,' said she; 'I wonder is it heat that is upon them; but they tarry not to be milked, if it is.' The son of Amlaibh became angered, and he gave her a blow," which is said to have knocked out a tooth.

King Brían, on the other hand, kneeling in his post by

Tomar's Wood still prayed (10). "He sang fifty psalms, and fifty prayers, and fifty paternosters, and he asked the attendant after that what the condition of the battalions was. The attendant answered and said, 'Mixed and closely confounded are the battalions, and each of them has come within the grasp of the other; and not louder in my ears would be the echoes of blows from Tomar's Wood, if seven battalions were cutting it down, than are the resounding blows upon heads, and bones, and skulls, on both sides.' He asked of Murchad's standard; and the attendant said—'It is standing, and many of the banners of the Dál gCais are around it; and many heads are falling around it, and a multitude of trophies, and spoils, with heads of the Foreigners are along with it.' 'That is good news, indeed,' said Brían." Again he prayed, and asked of the battle. "There is not living on earth," said the lad, "one who could distinguish one of them from the other. For the greater part of the hosts at either side are fallen, and those who are alive are so covered with spatterings of the crimson blood—head, body, and vesture—that a father could not know his son from any other of them, so confounded are they." Murchad's standard was now far off, it had passed through the battalions, and was still aloft in the west. Brían said, "The men of Erinn shall be well while that standard remains standing, because their courage and valour shall remain in them all, as long as they can see that standard." Once more the skin rug was readjusted and he prayed as before, and again asked of the battle. It was, said the lad, "the same as if Tomar's Wood was on fire, and the seven battalions had been cutting away its underwood . . . leaving its stately trees and its immense oaks standing . . . and Murchad's standard has fallen." "That is sad news," said Brían; "on my word," said he, "the honour and valour of Erinn fell when that standard fell; and Erinn has fallen now, indeed. . . . And what avails it me to survive this, or that I should obtain the sovereignty of the world,

after the fall of Murchad, and Conaing, and the other nobles of the Dál gCais, in like manner?" He was urged to escape to the camp. "Oh God! thou boy," said Brían, "retreat becomes us not, and I myself know that I shall not leave this place alive; and what would it profit me if I did? For Aibhinn of Craig Liath came to me last night," said he, "and she told me that I should be killed this day." He is supposed then to have given his last directions ("I have not wealth of gold or silver," said he). As they talked earl Brodir came from Tomar's Wood in which he had taken his place, and approached with two warriors. "Woe is me, what manner of people are they?" said Brían. "A blue stark-naked people," said the attendant. "Alas!" said Brían, "they are the Foreigners of the armour, and it is not to do good to thee they come." Brodir passed him by and noticed him not. One of the three, supposed to be a traitor who had once been in Brían's service, called to him—"Cing, Cing," said he, "this is the Cing." "No, no, but prest, prest," said Brodir; "it is not he," says he, "but a noble prest." "By no means," said the soldier; "that is the great king Brían." "Now," tells the Njal saga, "Brodir saw that king Brían's men were chasing the fleers, and that there were few men by the shield-burg. Then he rushed out of the wood, and broke through the shield-burg and hewed at the king." He "cleft his head utterly," says the Irish saga. And Brodir called out with a loud voice—"Now let man tell man that Brodir felled Brían."

Thus it was that as he arose from prayer the last vision on earth of the great king of Ireland was the axe swung over his head by the pagan foreigner; and the field of slaughter, where his standard had fallen among the bravest of his house. So died, says the Irish saga, "one of the three best that ever were born in Erinn; and one of the three men who most caused Erinn to prosper, namely Lugh Lamha-fada, and Finn Mac Cumhaill, and Brían son of Cennétig." *Dia lena anam.*

The whole peoples of Ireland, Irish of north and south and Norse citizens, united to glorify the memory of so great a king. The dead body of the peace-maker must have been borne in honour over the terrible bridge of slaughter below the fort of Dubhlinn, and through the streets of the foreign settlement to Kilmainham. From their city the body was reverently carried in state through the purely Norse territory of Fingall, and into the heart of the most disturbed and troubled region of Ireland, among princes the most recalcitrant, leaders of revolt, long the most jealous of Brían's policy of final unity. "The community of Swords came on the morrow and brought the bodies of Brían and Murchad to Swords and thence to Duleek (Diamhliag Cianain). And the community of Duleek escorted them to Louth. And Maelmhuire son of Eochaid, *coarb* of Patrick, came with the community of Armagh to Louth to meet those bodies. And they buried Brían king of Ireland, Octavian Augustus of the Gael, Emperor of Ireland and Scotland and of Britons and Saxons and of part of France, after being one score and seventeen years king of Munster and twelve years king of Ireland, in the north-western side of the temple of Armagh in a coffin apart, and Murchad and the heads of Conaing and Mothla in another coffin apart. Twelve nights was the congregation of Patrick watching those bodies with hymns and psalms and canticles" (11). No such tribute had ever been paid, or was ever again given to any king in Ireland. Nor is it easy now to measure the full significance of the great pacification that solemnized the last passage of Brían Bórama in peace from the foreign city of Dublin to Swords of Columcille, and Armagh of Patrick. The *comarb* of the great saint, bearing his relics, the rulers of ancient communities, with the powerful stewards who guided the affairs of wide territories, and the leading scholars and teachers of their time, reverently conducted the bier on its long journey. The princes of Ulster made no opposition to the king whose fame was his indomitable will for peace, and the

piety of his single-hearted patriotism. Thus the congregation of S. Patrick and the people of the north "waked" the high-king from the south for twelve nights; and then laid him in a new tomb (12).

Honour was given to Brían from every side. The Annals of Ulster woke from long contempt to proclaim him "the high-king of the Gaels of Ireland and of the Foreigners and Britons, the Augustus of all the north-west of Europe." "Erinn fell by the death of Brían," lamented the Irish saga of the south. "Illustrious in the eastern world was the conduct of Brían among the Franks." "Brían fell but saved his kingdom," said the Norse poet. But no tribute was so astonishing as that of the Irish nation at his burial.

EPILOGUE

" Brían's battle " was not a war on the settled Norse inhabitants of Ath Cliath. From the attitude of the Dublin citizens and merchants it is manifest how the high-king's policy, in spite of the restless violence of Sitric, had gradually drawn the Foreigners into the community of the Irish people. The merchants of the city showed no signs of supporting Sitric, and the crafty young king, if by private ambition and treachery he intrigued to call in an enemy from oversea, was evidently not acting on behalf of the Dublin men. A great change had come since the time of the old Norse warrior kings. Sitric, looking from the battlements, " went not into the battle on that day."

After the battle there was no quarrel on either side between the Dublin men and the Irish. It would even seem that there was a good understanding between Brían's army and the citizens. The account of the *Leabhar Oiris* tells that " it was the advice of Cian son of Maelmuadh and Tadhg son of Brían to bring all the wounded into Kilmainham and encamp there for that night." The Irish troops lay undisturbed for two days on the Green of Ath Cliath while Donnchad, Brían's son, went foraging for food; and when he returned on the night of Easter Sunday with eight and twenty oxen driven in from the Norse territories, Sitric's personal rage and attempted interference were defied, and the cattle slaughtered on the field for the famishing army (13). Mael Seachlinn had probably already gone into Meath to take up again the high-kingship. On Monday the Munstermen buried their dead and made sledges and biers to carry the wounded. No attack was made on

them when the next day the remnant of the host gathered to begin their painful march home.

There was now no king of Munster, and therefore no commander-in-chief of the hostings from the various under-kingdoms—an army at once victorious and broken by its desperate battle. The long peace established by Brían and Cian was closed. The controversy which inevitably followed has been confused by genealogists with their learned inventions of "alternate sovereignties." We have seen that succession to the high-kingship at Tara was historically reserved to two dynasties, who followed each other in regular alternation. Though there is no record of any express constitutional pact, the alternation was a well-recognized fact. And on this fact mediæval genealogists in their reconstruction of prehistoric Irish history rested part of their work, throwing back the history of the monarchy to the first arrival of the Gaels in Ireland, and selecting names in turn out of the pedigrees of the principal dynasties (14). No such pedigrees were made out for any kings save those of Tara. The kingship of Munster had no such record; and we may set aside legends of an "alternate" pact in which the Eóganachta and the Dalcassians were the supposed partners (15). From the history of Munster it is plain that succession to kingship was not hereditary but elective. The claimant of the Eóganachta who secured common consent was the rightful king.

Since the tragic death of Cormac the kings of Cashel had practically ceased to exist as a governing force. The line of the Dál gCais had now been almost stricken to death. Brían had fixed all his experienced hopes on the standard of Murchad; and when the son whom he had trained fell—"Erin has fallen now indeed," said he. Donnchad was a youth of whom nothing was yet known except a couple of foraging raids round Dublin at a time when all the men there had been withdrawn from the lands for the fight in the city. Brían was reported to hold him in no favour; and his later career was that of a hard

raider, and after a time a dethroned king. The one outstanding chief and famous warrior who had survived was Cian, who had held high command at Clontarf. Son of Maelmuadh (Molloy) who had once been king of Munster (16), of the royal race of Corc and the old Eóganachta, he was lord of the most wealthy and important territory in Munster, rivalling the Danish states in commerce and sea-power. A natural leader, renowned as a warrior, he was famous for his personal beauty and nobility. Moreover as son-in-law of Brían he had been his faithful ally and companion in journeyings and hostings for the last thirty-five years.

On the first night of their homeward march the men of the Dál gCais and of Desmond had their customary separate camps under their own leaders. The same system was followed when the next night they came to the Rath of Mullaghmast, a royal fort of the Leinster kings six miles from the Barrow boundary: the two remaining sons of Brían, Donnchad and Tadhg, made their camp on the Rath for the Dál gCais, and Cian another camp for his own people. "Donnchad had but one thousand men, and Cian had three thousand."

The critical strife arose, as by necessity, at the crossing of the border-land. Cian, lord of Desmond, claimed his right to election against the young princes of the Dál gCais, as being of the elder line of Eógan Mór, "for Eógan Mór was senior to Cormac Cas," and entitled to subjection and fidelity (17). The conflict brought into debate a third claimant, one of the last phantasmal "kings of Cashel," Domhnall (son of the Dubhdabhairenn slain by his own people fifty-five years earlier in 959), who allied himself to the strongest side. Never, said Donnchad of the Dál gCais, would he give to Cian pledge or hostage, and when he could gather more troops he would remember his insolence. At news of this debate the wounded and sick of the Dál gCais arose, taking their swords, and stuffed their wounds with moss—the healing bog-moss well known to their old doctors, and

at last in our own time re-discovered by a modern surgeon for service in the European war of 1914. Under such terrible conditions Cian refused to fight. There was an interlude with Domhnall of Cashel. "What profit have we of this battle?" he asked of Cian. "What profit dost thou seek?" said Cian. An equal division of all the land Cian should conquer was what the Cashel king wanted, "because I am not better pleased to be under thee than under the son of Brían Boru, unless for the profit of land and territory for myself." Cian had no truck with the new volunteer: the armies of Desmond and Cashel marched to their separate homes, and the "kings of Cashel" practically passed out of history.

Another peril awaited the Dál gCais when they reached the river. At Athy they drank of the water of the ford, and their wounds were cleansed. Before they actually crossed the frontier Mac Gillapatrick of Ossory and the men of Leinster, having sent out scouts to watch their path, lay in wait for them as "natural enemies to each other," since by Brían his father had been kept prisoner for a year and forced to give hostages (977). They demanded pledges or battle. Once more, according to the tale, the wounded prepared to fight, and sent to the nearest wood for stakes against which they could put their backs to support them standing in the battle; on which the men of Ossory fell back. Some of the Dál gCais were there buried at the river-side, others brought back to lie in the shelter of their own hereditary churches. "And thus they arrived at Kincora."

The hundred and fifty years that followed the battle of Clontarf remain practically a blank in Irish history. No effort has been made by any modern historian to trace the actual developments for good or ill in Ireland itself—for example in the practice of law or in schools of learning, in the course of administration and government, in foreign intercourse, in the arts, in the monastic system and its

sheltered industries, in agriculture, in trade, or in any evidences of common national tradition.

Materials certainly exist for such a study, whether we seek for them in famous manuscripts or in local records and traditions, whose study is of the utmost importance. There remain testimonies in our Museums, possibly in forgotten and neglected ruins, in scattered literary fragments such as have been revealed to us by the collections of Kuno Meyer. But none of the elements of an important and very critical period have yet been sorted out or co-ordinated.

We have lived, so far as great parts of Irish history are concerned, on a cheap form of guess-work. We have also been entangled in an accepted philosophy, easily adapted to an obscure time of which little or nothing was known, and readily developed on behalf of the next conquering invaders. It is a general view that foreign conquest is in fact justified by the right of a superior civilization, in its beneficence, to impose itself on barbarism. This was fortified by the assumption that in Ireland "tribal" communities roamed over "common lands," owning no property and practising no agriculture to speak of; that the acceptance of blood-money for killing marked a people indifferent to violence and murder; a people who had no sense of "law" as understood by civilized men, and who demonstrated this by leaving their whole island without any system or means for enforcing penalties, beyond private revenge, on even the worst criminals.

The absurdities of the customary theories advanced, with no research behind them, prove the futility of accepting or inventing generalizations for the critical period from the death of Brían Boru. If we yield to the belief that Ireland had a law and culture made by her own people, and duly worked out by them, it is plain that the whole of mediaeval Irish history must be re-written —not as a conflict between civilization and savagery, but as a very real and tragic part of the story of how man

from his first origin has had laid on him the necessity of creating the law by which he can best live; and of how the people of Ireland met and sustained that obligation.

For the present there is, however, one decisive comment on the battle of Clontarf—the word of the Norse themselves: "Brian fell, but saved his kingdom." That day finally ended the possibility of a foreign Scandinavian conquest and sovereignty in Ireland. It made no severance between the whole community of the dwellers in Ireland.

REFERENCES, CHAPTER XXI.

(1) P. 398. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," pp. 143–147.
(2) P. 400. Annals of Ulster, 1013.
(3) P. 400. *Ib.*, 1012.
(4) P. 402. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 151.
(5) P. 403. "The Saga of Burnt Njal," ed. Dasent, II, pp. 324, 327.
(6) P. 404. *Ib.*, II, p. 328.
(7) P. 404. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," pp. 151–153
(8) P. 406. *Ib.*, p. 171.
(9) P. 410. *Ib.*, pp. 179 *seq.*
(10) P. 412. *Ib.*, pp. 197 *seq.*
(11) P. 414. The *Leabhar Oiris*, edited by R. I. Best (*Ériu*, I, pp. 74 *seq.*).
(12) P. 415. Annals of Ulster, 1014.
(13) P. 416. "War of the Gaedhil and the Gaill," p. 211.
(14) P. 417. MacNeill: "Phases of Irish History," p. 239.
(15) P. 417. O'Mahony: "History of the O'Mahony Septs," p. 30.
(16) P. 418. *Ib.*, pp. 36–40.
(17) P. 418. For the late origin of the Munster kings see "Phases of Irish History," p. 127–8. The arguments attributed to Cian were thought suitable by the literary compilers.

APPENDIX

"The antiquity of the earlier strata of Irish law-tracts is shown by various evidences.

"The oldest tracts, which were held in the tradition of the schools to be the original and authentic record of the older unwritten doctrines of Irish law, are accompanied by glosses and commentaries, exactly as the books of the Bible are treated in the Irish ecclesiastical schools of that age. Many of the extant glosses are in the language of the Old Irish period, *i.e.* earlier than 900 A.D.

"Between the oldest tracts and the time of these glosses there is a stratum of law-tracts which were not received in the schools as belonging to the canon of ancient law, and which accordingly are not glossed or made a basis for commentary. *Crith Gablach*, which I have translated, is typical of this stratum. Apart from the absence of gloss and commentary, the relative antiquity of this and the earlier stratum is indicated by form and style. The earlier stratum clearly reflects the mnemonic teaching of a purely oral method. The later stratum, though it has not got away altogether from the tradition of this method, adopts in general the style of a prose treatise. *Crith Gablach* may serve for illustration. Each section in it begins with a question, in reminiscence of the method of question and answer employed in the older oral teaching. Unlike the older stratum, however, it does not cast the answers in mnemonic form, but rather in a developed prose style, and in long paragraphs, not intended to be committed to memory. On the strength of its general accidence, Meyer assigned *Crith Gablach* to the eighth century. I have no hestitation in saying that this tract belongs at latest to the first quarter of the eighth century.

"On like grounds, it is reasonable to think that none of the glossed tracts is of later date than the close of the seventh century. Their language exhibits archaic forms and idioms which are not found elsewhere in written Irish.

"In my paper on Cenn Faelad, I show that the transition from the exclusively oral to the written teaching of Irish law must have begun in his time. He became a student soon after the battle of Moira in 637 and died in 679.

"In the glossed tracts themselves we can recognize two fairly distinct strata: an older stratum which is a direct record of oral teaching, and a newer stratum which shows evidence of rearrangement by writers. Correspondingly, there are two kinds of versification in these tracts. There are remains of very early verse, which, owing to the great changes undergone by the language before the seventh century, no longer exhibit

a determinable metrical form. There are also passages in verse which exhibit well-defined metrical forms of a kind peculiar to the seventh century, arising, in fact, from a combination of archaic Irish metric with the metric of Latin hymns.

"It should not be overlooked that the druidical *disciplina* which Julius Cæsar found in Gallia Transalpina, with its tradition of teaching orally and in verse, continued in Ireland until the seventh century, and that the oldest Irish law-tracts are records not of popular or aristocratic custom, but of law received from the men of learning, the *filid*.

"Our only alternative to the thesis that the early law-tracts date from the seventh century is to suppose that they have taken the place of tracts of that time which have been wholly lost, and this supposition is on many grounds untenable. Why, for instance, should the glossators of the ninth century have preserved and worked on relatively late instead of early tracts? The argument could be extended. I will only say now that I have not found any reason or any indication from which even a probability can be deduced that a single one of the published glossed tracts must be assigned to a date later than the seventh century.

"The whole of the older material so far published does not extend beyond the scope of 200 or 250 octavo pages. All this belongs to the seventh and eighth centuries. It should be studied apart from the commentaries, which are of much later date, and which, though they help to elucidate some obscurities of the older vocabulary, cannot be accepted as authentic expositions of the older law. Difficulties no doubt arise from the published translation and from its rendering of ancient technical terms by wholly inappropriate and misleading English equivalents, *e.g.*—

tuath = civitas, by "tribe" or "territory."
fine = joint family, by "tribe."
céle = client freeholder, by "tenant."
boaire = noble of kine, by "bo-aire chief."
cin = original liability, by "crime."
díre = supplemental liability, by "dire-fine."
éraicc = payment (of any kind), by "eric" = wergeld, etc., etc."

Eoin MacNeill.

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